THE TRIUMPH OF LIFE

WILLIAM PARQUHAR PAYSON

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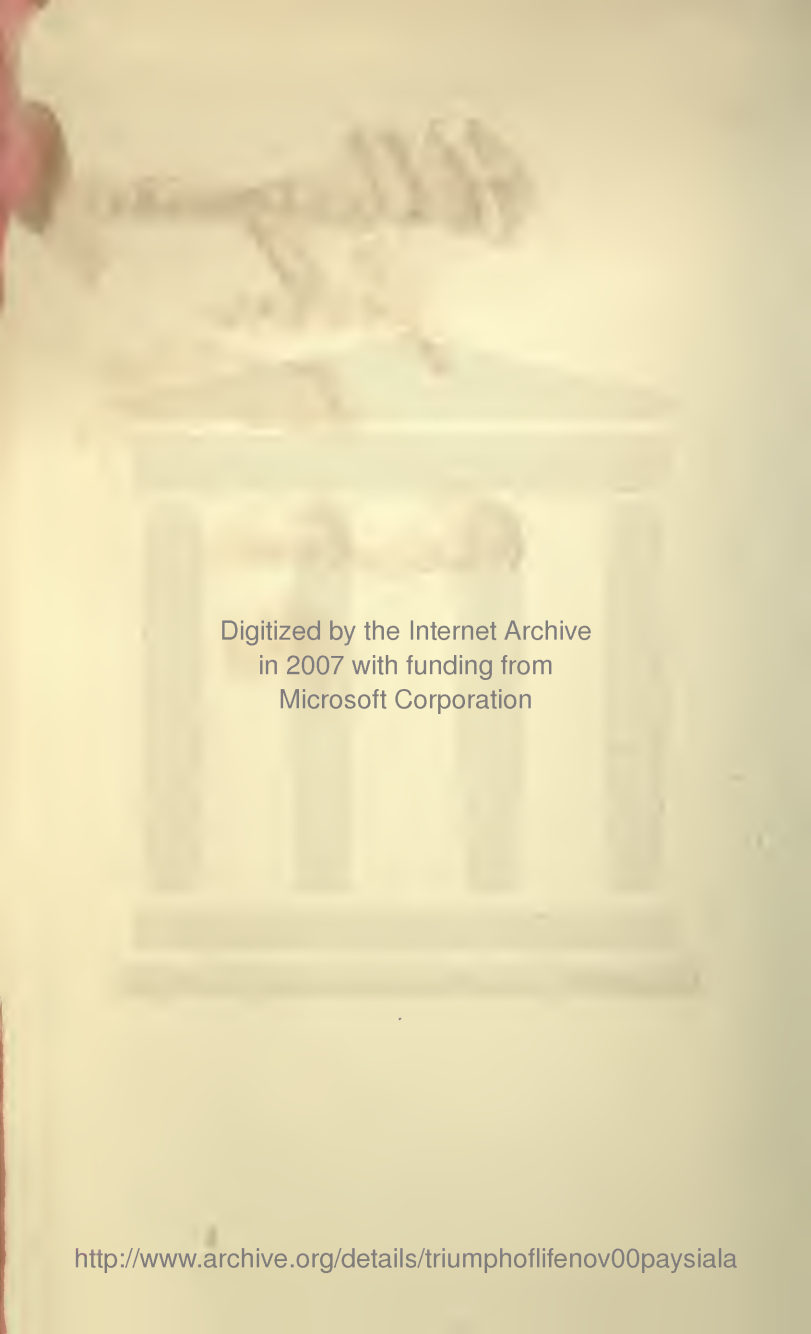
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THE TRIUMPH OF LIFE

A Novel

BY

WILLIAM FARQUHAR PAYSON

AUTHOR OF "JOHN VYTAL"

NEW YORK AND LONDON

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"A good man in the direful grasp of ill,
His consciousness of right retaineth still."
—GOETHE'S *Faust*.

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Book I

THE TRIUMPH OF LIFE

I

Time's Forelock

THE face of the clock was difficult to read. Thanks to its intricate decoration, the ormolu timepiece, even by day propounding a riddle, was at present yet more mysterious in the shadows of a room very faintly illuminated.

Céleste admired this delicate conceit from her birthplace, and approved its considerate evasion. Her own little face was scarcely less non-committal. Who but she and the clock-makers of Paris could have trifled so airily with Time?

She strained her eyes, but could distinguish only the ornamentation.

To the right, on top of the disk, a two-inch Love, backed by an ormolu flame, sturdily mimicked a blacksmith. Under the wings a knot of gilt ribbon, ends a-fly, fastened his only garment, the farrier's apron. With one diminutive hand he forever extended his tongs to the anvil and held thereon a tiny heart; with the other he poised his hammer. To the left stood a taller figure, the shape of Time himself, resting with arms akimbo on his upturned scythe, and brows drawn down as if to inspect the absurdly inadequate Vulcan.

What did it mean? She forgot the commonplace enigma beneath, in studying its more poetic interpretation. To look at the hands of the clock was boldly to confront the lapses. On the contrary, to peep at the Smithy of Life was to tickle her fancy with countless little "Whats" and "Whens" and "Wherefores." The future ran riot with a medley of alternatives: Now or later?—This or that?—So-and-so or some one else? Well, well; everything depends on the heat of the ormolu flame and the leniency of the taller figure.

At all events, the group conveyed one satisfactory meaning. It assured her that, in spite of her birth and childhood, she had acquired a pretty taste, a taste, in fact, so rare as to be capable of restricting its whims by discrimination, and modifying its recherché tendency by close attention to that subtle prerequisite — the Touch Refined. Five years in an American convent had not been spent in vain. She had gained a remarkable knowledge of the English language. A born linguist, she was perfectly at home in it and spoke with an idiomatic fluency all but native in accent. She had acquired, moreover, an invaluable smattering of literature, history, and the arts, and at least the shell of the nuns' religion. So long as the dainty superstitions had stuck to her she was glad to dispense with the heart of it and the truth. The symbols alone had impressed her; their meaning had utterly failed. Not so the meaning of the next five years — the five of a checkered career in the world.

Well, some day these and the others and the brilliant polish she had acquired therefrom would probably tell to advantage. Not a trick should be left unlearned in the process of self-advancement. Time, dawdle! Ormolu flame, leap high! Smith, to your work; forge the thing, finish it; finish a thing with horse-shoe luck and a heart's blindness! Thereupon toss it still hot,

if you please, to the woman below before the old Reaper spies her.

Poof! Some day she would look back and smile and say to herself, "Yes, yes, the years when I sat by the Forge of Life and blew at the flame and cajoled the watcher and hurried the smith — yes, those years were dark; but so is night before the morning." Some day, of course, she would laugh; but now, equally of course, she could hardly bear it.

Sinking back among the cushions of her sofa, she stifled a nervous sob, then touched her lashes with a practised finger lest tears should inflame her lids. With closed eyes and hands lying listless beside her, she now made as though to resign herself to the monotony of waiting. But suddenly, under her palm near the sofa's edge, she felt a touch, the disturbing touch of something damp and frigid. Recoiling with a shiver, she peered at the floor, then frowned, slipped down a foot, and proceeded to remove with a vicious little kick the cause of this unpleasant contact.

"Yap!" rose a cry of offended caninity.

"Only Bonhomme!" she muttered with annoyance. "Little fool!"

Out from below the sofa had crawled a diminutive dog of the dachshund breed, who, having heard no doubt the sounds of distress above him, had sought to give solace by the gentle intrusion of his nose. Ordinarily the hand above — the little white hand of his destiny—was beneficent with pats or titbits. These he had been wont to obtain by dint of a telling, but unobtrusive, mendicancy. The trick was this: to sniff the air with an eager nose, to balance erect on his wabbly haunches, to burlesque a prayer with his flapper-like paws and say nothing. In return for the charity thus induced what had he, p'tit Bonhomme, to offer? And yet there were times when his mistress, too, seemed sorely

in need of a hand above. Had he not seen her go even so far as to imitate his own little plan with mimic petitions to the ceiling? On such an occasion, or, again, when she uttered the human equivalent of a whine, how could any save an ingrate withhold the consolation of his nose? But, alack! not always a hand descended; his destiny possessed a foot no less impulsive, also a voice that sent shivers from the scruff of his neck to the tip of his distant tail. "Little fool," it now commanded; "come here!" Céleste sprang up from the sofa. Pulling aside one of the portières that curtained her alcove bedroom, "Hurry up," she stamped; "go in and stay there!" For a moment he watched her out of the corner of his eyes and cringed with terror. "Get in!" He crawled thither in a wide détour, then, dashing past the foot of his fate, skulked silently into the darkness.

Céleste let fall the portière and flung herself again among the cushions. Bad luck to Bonhomme! The touch of his nose had set her on edge, and she wanted to think in quiet. A plan was waiting to be shaped, a plan both methodic and capricious. How amusing to remain in her present position; simply to lie out motionless, hands clasped, eyes closed, and let her expected visitor suppose her asleep, or dead, or dying! How diverting and yet resultful! The effect would increase her power. It would pave the way to the daring demand with which she intended so severely to test the strength of his infatuation. It would serve as an excellent prologue to the play. What a diverting introduction to the bewildering little farce whose authorship and leading part could be claimed by one and the same inventive woman!

Scene: New York. Period: To-night. Curtain rises, disclosing (she sat up again and glanced about her) a sitting-room, or boudoir, dimly lighted. The key-note is taste struggling against poverty, a taste bizarre, perhaps, and erratic, yet none the less apparent in deft

touches that seek with all the bravery of feminine attempt to oust the spirit of the shoddy. For instance, two little sepia photogravures of figures by Boucher and Watteau hang immediately under a brass gas fixture of the sort that is deemed beautiful by saloon-keepers' wives of the lower East Side. In further contrast, a Whistler etching, well selected, simply framed, hangs against a wall-paper decorated with gilt scrolls and impossible flowers that almost smell of a cheap department store. In the centre of the room an ormolu clock, daintily wrought, surmounts a cracked mantel-shelf of mustard-colored marble. On the end of the shelf stands a large pink box of bonbons, with cover aside and paper-lace frippery fringing the edges. At right, a recess behind portières. At left, two windows, of which the soiled white casing is only partly hidden by greenish velours curtains, threadbare with age. Between these and the mustard-colored mantel-shelf (here she sank back with more satisfaction) a low sofa stands obliquely beside the hearth. Behind it a lamp; before it a coal fire fallen to embers low in the grate. (She now reclosed her eyes and settled among the cushions. Henceforth she had an advantage over the ordinary playwright in that she could stipulate as to the appearance of the heroine.) On the sofa Céleste is discovered asleep, or dead. The lines of her diminutive figure are defined by the effulgent lamp; she wears a clinging peignoir of black silk overlaid with gauze. Under the film the silk is shot with indeterminate silver crescents. These lend touches of a vague sheen to the shadowy garment. The silver is merely an impression, impalpable, moon-colored, necromantic. Imparting an effect lunescent and yet cloudy, it mysteriously allures the senses as the moon allures the tide. Her face is softly illumined by the glowing coals. With peculiar appropriateness, she is fairly bathed in artificial light.

Yet the face itself is dimly seen. The shadows lurking in her hair seem to lengthen downward; they deepen the mystery of her slumber. On the floor lies a book discarded; an empty arm-chair is at her side.

She began to imagine the action of the piece. Thus: A bell rings, a step is heard. Enter suddenly the cat's-paw. He pauses, advances, gazes down, then — curtain!

How original, how daring! What a tableau for the opening act! Who else could so coquet with the proprieties, yet never actually offend? Thus are the farces of the Variétés veiled for the Madison Square. Subtly she appreciated virtue. Was it not an expedient always to be guarded as the most valuable asset of ambition? In the old dark days of the quais and alleys, come who might to the Quarter, this one possession she had hoarded, so to speak, by an unusual freak of shrewdness. Though in language and thought and knowledge of things no better than the rest, she had never forfeited, as they had, the first advantage. They had called her "La P'tite qui Refuse." Yet it had all been a question of expediency. None had considered her harmless. "Beware!" once had counselled a priest of Notre Dame; "she is dangerous. Even her virtue is evil."

Céleste, now recalling this reported warning, laughed aloud. Dangerous? Not a bit, save that all fascination is dangerous, willy-nilly. If a man by merely looking loses himself, wherein is the woman to blame? Her little comedy would shame reproach. "Honi soit," and so forth. How convenient is the motto of the Garter! Complications? Yes, why not? She enjoyed a farce at sixes-and-sevens, provided she could be fairly certain of the end. Well and good; ring up the curtain!

With a smile of derision at the taller figure on the

timepiece, Céleste sprang lightly from her couch. Slipping to the hearth, she stood on tiptoe and laughingly tweaked between thumb and forefinger the almost invisible forelock of Time. "There," she cried, "run away now if you can before the heart is finished!"

At this very moment, by a strange coincidence, the hammer of Cupid fell. The clock began to strike. *Ting!* She stepped back. *Ting! ting!* rang the tiny heart on the anvil — nine times.

She looked surprised. Only nine? No later? Her face brightened; she had by no means lost. This was the hour mentioned in her note. She ran to the window. As a rule he was promptness personified. She threw up the sash. Never had he missed his cue for an entrance. She wrapped the peignoir close about her. The night was bitterly cold. Resting a hand on the sill, she looked up and down the avenue. Car after car clanged by. As each approached the corner she watched it intently, but none stopped. Her shoulders trembled with a shiver. She frowned. The shiver was not only from the cold. The location fell so short of her ideal. Lower Lexington Avenue! What irony in her present position! Yes, but what congruity as well! Behind her, the great East Side, the under world; before her, the highways of fashion. She was poised, one might say, between hell and heaven. Only a couple of blocks and there lay Madison Avenue—her dream! Only a couple of blocks, and yet in the matter of boarding prices what a gulf between! She glanced down. Gleams of the street lights revealed the stoops and areas that marked the respectable squalor, the lost prosperity, so apparent in this desolate row of houses. Respectable? Yes, at any rate respectable. Her frown vanished in a dreary smile. Respectability was more desirable than certain showy quarters at the same cost elsewhere. With a nod

she told herself that she would have willingly paid even more for this than to be in any doubtful apartment-house, even though it boasted an elevator, marble columns, and a black hall-boy resplendent in gilt braid. For a time she must conform to the code of irreproachable mediocrity. This miserable abode served well enough for a compromise, an intermediate state of probation — purgatory. What if its high stoop did lack symmetry and mortar? What if its balusters, once falsely proclaiming themselves brown stone, now showed shiny in the gleam like the sleeves of a dilapidated coat, and spots of obvious cast-iron belied pretence? Some evening in the opulent future she would smile back to this from the lap of luxury and laugh to herself, "How different, that night when I stood by the window and shivered and waited, and waited and shivered, on edge with uncertainty and cold!" All in good time; all in good time. Where there's a woman there's a will, and the man is the way.

Again she drew back. A car was coming. Across her vision the rails, lit by its head-light, gleamed keen. *Clang!* went the bell, and the wheels grated on the track. The great cumbrous enormity, aflare with lights, alive with heads, jerked heavily to a stop. Instantly it discharged a man. Then off again, sputtering sparks; off again, clanging into the night. She drew back farther. He crossed the street. Recognizing his tall, spare figure, she made sure that to-night its ungainliness was emphasized by impatience. Next, as he raised his head to study the door-plates (illegibly tarnished in Dismal Row), she closed the window softly. Then to the lounge, and, posing for the tableau, she listened breathless, till finally the jingle-jangle of the front door-bell rang deep in the bowels of the house.

At last! Ah, now there could be no hitch. The servant had been instructed to admit him without a card.

"Second floor, front, if you please." That would be sufficient.

Céleste made herself comfortable among the cushions. Fainter and fainter the jingle-jangle. She closed her eyes; she moistened her lips. The curtain had been rung up.

II

The Feline Principle

A KNOCK.

No answer.

Another and another, each more imperative than the last.

Still not a sound from within the room.

The door opened.

She lay as if lifeless, a figure of nebulous midnight, bizarre, funereal, necromantic, her pall of impalpable secret crescents in mysterious accord with the gleam and umbrage of her hair.

She heard him enter quickly, then start. Her eyelids quivered. She wanted to peer through her shadowy lashes — but no; to do so would be to laugh. His appearance at the moment must undoubtedly be absurd. She determined to take the mischief in good earnest.

Presently he stepped nearer. She held her breath. So far so good. But, alas! the machinations even of a Céleste frequently miscarry. Even those who from birth have an imp at the ear are now and then hoist with their own petard. Mischief is never reliable. Better no guardian spirit at all than an imp who apes an angel. For example, in the present instance, away flitted Céleste's from her ear and fell to tickling her nose. A wild desire to sneeze, due perhaps to her vigil at the window, snatched her back from the bourn of death and ruined its beautiful melancholy. Nevertheless, with Spartan endurance of the torture she kept her eyes

closed and checked the impulse — a facial, nasal, and even psychical proceeding that served, by the traces of pain on her features, to convey the effect of a troubled slumber.

At this she heard a deep-drawn sigh of relief, and the footsteps came softly to the sofa. As though in a dream she raised one hand with languorous grace and rested her head on the palm. Thus by a natural change of pose she bared an arm, whereof the skin, either with a faint, inherent olive tinge or shaded by the seemingly suffusive darkness of her hair, conveyed a sensuous impression. Her face, now higher in the lamp-light, dared his gaze; her lips were slightly parted. Feigning a dreamer's restlessness, she stirred almost imperceptibly, just enough to set a-shimmer the lurking silver and suggest her form. The motion was to movement as a whisper is to speech.

He bent over her. She felt his breath, but her pulses refused to flutter. Not a flush betrayed her, not a tremor — she wished they would! With a sudden, inconsistent revulsion she longed to feel disconcerted. Up to the present the play had been the thing, now it palled; her interest flagged. Yet how preposterous! Why should she—*she*—hope for a final flurry of emotion, a real sensation of timidity — alarm? What folly!

With a genuine yawn Céleste drowsily raised her lashes.

He straightened back. "Were you tired?"

In pretty bewilderment she rose to a sitting posture. "Where am I? How did you happen—?" She paused, frowning.

"The servant told me to come right up." He seated himself in the arm-chair.

"What! Too lazy, I suppose, to announce you. I'll complain and have her discharged. But how did you happen to call?"

Her visitor fingered his mustache, stroked it downward with his palm. "I got your note, of course."

"My note?" The frown deepened with perplexity. Then she nodded. "Ah, yes, yes; I had forgotten."

"Perhaps, and perhaps not," he shrugged incredulously, adding, in a sure, metallic voice, "Anyway, at last you've decided that Matthew Steele is the one man."

"You — the one man!"

He inclined his large head. "That was the understanding. 'If I write at all,' you agreed, 'it shall mean yes.'"

Céleste smiled up at him under lowered lids. "Then your wishes are still unchanged?"

"They are," he replied, with hard certainty; "you're the only woman who can make me forget my business." He spoke impressively, as one who would declare himself on a vital matter. To him it evidently meant much, to her so little that she laughed with an amusement not even scornful.

"In men like you, I suppose, this is a proof of ardent passion!"

"Perhaps, and perhaps not. At all events, it can't be ignored." He glanced about the room in a manner habitual with him, the air of an appraiser come to set a value on the furniture. From this to that went his cold gaze, unconcealedly drawing odious comparisons. It rested on the etchings an instant and longer on the shabby velours. It noticed the ormolu clock, but also the cracked mantel. It penetrated between the slightly parted portières and openly inspected the bedroom. It ignored the immaculate drawn-work pillow-shams, but dwelt on the cumbrous black-walnut bedstead. It seemed to acknowledge the value and exquisite workmanship noticeable in her sole souvenir of the convent, a silver crucifix hanging just visible against the headboard. But obviously he spent more time in observ-

ing the boarding-house quilt, now—bad luck!—thrown flauntingly over the foot-board.

Céleste shuddered. What a hodge-podge! Oh, to raise her own belongings above the level of a landlady's! "Well," she half apologized, "you see this is only a kind of cocoon. At first, you know, in the horrid old Quarter I was merely a sort of caterpillar, but now I've progressed to the chrysalis stage, and later—ah, some day—you shall see me emerge resplendent." She was thinking of one possession which by no means deserved to be excluded from the mental inventory in the making of which she had nervously followed his survey. She owned herself—best of all, she owned herself. His gaze must return to her. She caught it back. "Oh, why did I write?"

"What!" He stared at her troubled face. "What's that?"

"Oh, why have I sent for you?"

"Because you need me."

"Do I?" She lay back, half reclining among the cushions. Comfortable thus, yet never more present-minded, she could have posed as "The Spirit of the Feline." Shading her face with one hand, she watched him out of the shadow. Had he been here earlier in the evening he might have learned a lesson from the disheartening adventure of Bonhomme. The Spirit of the Canine exemplifies the better part of valor when the Spirit of the Feline watches from the dark. But Matthew Steele, versed only in the outright, the direct, the big, plain, forceful methods of his beginnings in the West, practised merely the law of survival that governs the struggle when man meets man or dog meets dog. Assured by her note, he failed to suspect any strategy, to imagine the claws, to appreciate the possibility of that long psychological stealth and final spring which in certain females of the *genus homo* corresponds to the in-

stinctive manœuvres of a cat. And yet, has she not been feared, this Spirit of the Feline, ever since the world began? Behold her a power ages ago; one to be placated; stealthy, subtle, cat-eyed; preying on men of the Nile; deity of misfortune; the goddess Pakht; attribute of Isis, innate in the Female Principle. If ever divinity was incarnate and reincarnate, she was and is and will be to the crack of doom.

Yet here sat Steele, braving her present avatar as few poor Copts of the past would have braved her graven mother.

And Pakht enjoyed his helplessness. For a time she held him to irrelevancies, thanks to a way she had, describable aptly—to quote the comment of her inward amusement—as a "knack of femininity." This, where most men were concerned, had proved an inestimable resource. Whether it would with him she was not so sure. He lacked the romantic self-deceit with which so many invested their amours. Céleste opined that even yet men young and old find gratification in lending a smack of glamour to affairs of love, no matter how false the imitation, as though, with a certain pathetic reaching back towards the primordial idyllic, they would strive to retain at least a noble savagery, not consciously deflowered. She perceived, however, that no such rose color—indicating, perhaps, in many the embers of a dying fire—existed in Matthew Steele.

Thus and so, filling up the prologue with illusive nothings, Céleste contemplated the present specimen of masculinity much as she might have inspected some perplexing costume offered at a bargain sale. With a kind of mental fingering she felt his fibre, turned him over quickly in her mind, measured, mauled, and valued him, wondering if the garment would become her and show her off.

He, on the other hand, was for the moment in danger

of losing his calculative powers. For once his usual precaution of footing up a personality as though it were a balance-sheet was forgotten; he could only sit there in silence, blankly staring. She laughed inwardly at the awkwardness of his appearance. In order to bring his chair near the sofa, his lank legs were drawn up, with knees protruding, which, together with the straw color of his sparse hair and mustache, the shallow grayness of his eyes and their opaque, china-like surface, rendered him at the present moment apparently quite lacking in that masterful common-sense and good judgment for which he was well known in the business world.

Superficially no two could have presented a more striking contrast. Small almost to dwarfishness, yet exerting a deep influence, Céleste lay there and posed with an arm again thrown back — a bare arm, umbral and sensuous, shaded by her hair; lay there still, with an occasional stir that started the silver shimmering beneath the gauze of shadow; lay there still, with graceful, bewitching, mocking languor in every line and motion; and now—as had not been the case in her counterfeit slumber—with slightly lifted lashes, from under which looked out the very spirit of nightfall, dusk half-carnate, devious intensities of the dark.

Steele, on the contrary, would have presented to the casual a personality diametrically opposed: metallic commercialism, the embodiment of coinage, a character wholly comprehended in the dollar-sign. Yet below all this there was a strange similarity between them. What was natural in him she had assimilated, until calculation, her second nature, had grown to be like his, the first. By frequently pursing her lips, perhaps on occasion to emphasize refusal or seal resolve, she had reduced their natural fulness, and her eyes had acquired a hard surface, translucent, yet impenetrable as glass.

Recognizing the likeness, Céleste found him conge-

nial, a man who could understand and aid her, one from whom after a suitable course in platonics she might obliterate the troublesome foils of sex.

For several moments he kept silence, then, "The only woman," he repeated to himself, "who can make me forget my business."

Evidently a growing realization of the fact appalled him. She studied his eyes for the hundredth time, and concluded that even now, at the height of his passion, they were little more than lenses, well enough in their way for optical purposes, but utterly lacking a language of their own. They perfectly harmonized with his mercantile announcement. An automaton was making love. A machine constructed for the amassing of money, a kind of comptometer, one might call it, invented for figuring, was declaring itself a man. Her amusement at this grotesque simile lurked in her eyes and brightened their laughter.

He shifted impatiently. "Céleste, I tell you there's nothing so very funny about it." He clasped a pair of large, prehensile hands across his knees. "Haven't I always been ready to mortgage my soul for your slightest whim?"

Céleste pouted at the toes of her tiny slippers. "Mortgage! Oh, still it's business, always business! Your soul? Do you call this negotiable security?"

Steele laughed shortly. "I have plenty of that too. I am rich now."

She nodded with satisfaction. "I know it." Then in a voice of annoying candor, "That's the very reason I sent you word of my whereabouts." She assumed a frank air of comradeship, impersonal as though discussing a third person. "I preferred to wait for the self-made man of middle age." Steele leaned nearer. Even this mercenary admission failed to lessen her magnetism; the cold-bloodedness of it seemed actually to in-

crease her power. "Let's see," she continued, pleasantly; "you began, if I remember the story, as a printer's devil, did you not?" She glanced quite openly at one of Steele's forefingers, which, though severed at the knuckle by an accident due to some error in the press-room of long ago, persisted in obtrusively stroking the wisps of his mustache. This disfigured member had ever fascinated her, being the only touch of the uncommon to relieve the hopeless mediocrity of his appearance. "And then," she pursued with a strange mingling of contempt and admiration, "in the West you peddled cheap novels, whereas now—"

"I publish them."

"Yes, and while you were a book-agent out there how fared Céleste? Can you guess?" He shook his head. "Remember," she smiled mysteriously, "nobody knows except two people."

"Who are they?"

"My father and mother."

"Do they live in America?"

"No matter. Well, at about that time Céleste was a model in Paris, first for the painter's art, then for the dressmaker's, whereas now—"

"Whereas now—?" repeated Steele, with gloomy interest.

She laughed a silvery, tinkling laugh. "Whereas now I am hoping soon to *patronize* both those schools of impression!"

His long lips parted in a gratified smile. Her conclusion promised well for the acceptance of a share of his fortune.

"So here we are," mused Céleste, abstractedly. "How interesting to trace the threads of destiny! Yours led you here across the continent, mine here across the sea. Then they met, and parted, and now they meet again."

"Which means," observed Steele, with an unusual attention to metaphor, "a knot."

"Yes, or else"— again a ring of mockery—"a tangle! At any rate, here we are, and how have we done it? As for you, they say your success is due to an abstemiousness that would shame an anchorite." Her eyes bantered and yet admired him. "You've never let yourself go, have you? Nor have I. That's the secret. You've outdone me, though. Is it true you drink nothing but milk with dinner?"

Steele nodded, coldly grave. "Or water."

She surveyed him with intent, analytical eyes. "Did it come by nature?"

"Yes, I have always disliked extremes."

"Have you? How dull! To avoid them is one thing, to dislike them another. How gray!" Suddenly she sat up and flashed a wondering look at him, as if struck by an idea exquisitely droll and entertaining. His utterly colorless personality affected her much as a sheet of white canvas might affect a painter with a passion for vivid hues. She longed to daub his nature with all the colors of the rainbow. Some day when her own success was assured she would attempt a diverting metamorphosis. "I wonder," she made bold to suggest aloud, "if Matthew Steele could be transformed."

He frowned helplessly. "You did that long ago."

"No, no. I mean—oh, what an experiment it would be! I love experiments. Do you know, there is an acute delight in grafting two natures together, as they do with trees and orchids and human flesh. This is the most delicate operation in psychology—a kind of metempsychosis—and the results—well, once upon a time in Paris—" She paused. "Oh, but Paris is a matter of ten years ago."

"I see," said he, "you have dropped all its little

phrases, gestures, etcetera." Afraid of the subject, he was striving to be critical.

Céleste laughed banteringly. "Tà-rà-tà-tà! Pense-tu, mon p'tit? Zometimes I use; zometimes I don't. When I am French—yes; when I am American—no!" And she gesticulated with jerky, piquant fingers, like any comédienne of the boulevard theatres.

Steele frowned. "Then you still have need of an alias? I supposed those shady financial transactions, those bubble stocks, with you secure in the background and some poor devil of a broker playing the cat's-paw—"

"Piff!" she shrugged; "when one needs, one searches. But what was I saying? Oh yes. How would it be, I wonder, to blend a little old world romance and fire with modern commercialism? How would you seem, for instance, as a sentimentalist? It is impossible to conceive." She laughed to herself a low, mischievous laugh, her eyes the while analyzing him through and through.

"You talk nonsense."

"Perhaps, perhaps; but we'll see later." Her imaginative powers were distorted and abnormal. To indulge them had become a form of spiritual vice. "You should have more ambition. I am a nobody," she told him, irrelevantly, triumphant in the realization that she could show this man her worst side, her true self, yet suffer nothing by the confidence.

His reply surprised her. "I know it," he admitted, with equal candor.

Céleste slipped from the sofa and tossed her head. Crossing to the hearth she looked down quizzically at the bed of ashes. "Do you, indeed — do you?" From the pink box of candy on the mantel-shelf she selected a tit-bit of chocolate and allowed it to melt on her tongue slowly. An inordinate love of bonbons was her only dissipation. "And yet I make you forget your business." Her laughter teased his ears.

"That means more than you can guess," he said, gravely. "I am one of the richest publishers in America."

She turned from the fire with a mock reverence. "I bow to Mammon!" Then, nodding frankly, "That is why I sent for you—partly because you are rich, and mostly because you're a publisher."

He squared as best he could his sloping shoulders. "There can be only one reason," he said, dully, "for your invitation."

"Ah, mais non." She tossed her head. "Croyez-vous, m'sieur, pour un moment que vous connaissez la vie, ou bien les pensées d'une femme?"

Steele shifted. "How in the world," he mentally regretted, "could I have mentioned this meaningless twaddle?" Then, aloud, "Speak English!"

"One reason? Only *one?*" she scoffed. "There's never only one with a woman. Either there are fifty, remember, or none at all. You say I'm a nobody, do you?" Her eyes snapped. "Well, you shall pay the penalty for not having contradicted me when I said the same thing myself. Why did I send for you? Do you suppose it was to say 'yes'? How droll! Do you suppose it was because I needed you? How presumptuous! Listen." Once more averting her face, she looked down into the grate, where a last ember, outliving the rest, was fading slowly in the ashes. Her voice fell low and serious. "Listen! The fact is, that after keeping my head so long I have suddenly lost it. I am in love with a mere boy!"

After which amazing declaration Céleste raised her elbows to the mantel-shelf and buried her face in her hands.

While she stood there the clock above her began to strike. The farrier's hammer fell. *Ting!* rang the tiny heart on the anvil—ten times.

III

The Man Who Turned Away

NOW should the Canine Principle have prompted a wary reconnoitre about the lair of the Ulterior Motive. Now should prudence have intervened. Where there are two there is ever one. Pity the other. Egged on in the present instance by chagrin, curiosity, and other malicious urchins of character, he adopted from valor the unwiser part. The dog still hoped to have his day. Waiting, he stared, very houndlike, fascinated by the deviousness of a different species.

Was she already confessing, Steele helplessly wondered, to a flaw in that cold, far-sighted policy which he had so long hoped would eventually bring her to him? Or had she invented the rival merely to kindle his jealousy?

With her next move the Ulterior Motive drew him deeper into the lair. "But I'm not so sure," she continued to muse, "whether I've cause to love or hate this boy." She faced her visitor; the long-lived ember had expired at last. "You see, it's this way." She paused. "Heavens!—don't, don't look at me like that!" She pretended to shudder. His eyes, wide with bewilderment, suggested the stock in trade of an optician; the average pair in a show-case; the conventional pair drawn up with a dozen in line; staring, white, convex, profanely hollow. "And yet how beautiful," she scintillated to herself, "in the sight of the blind! Don't, I implore you! What a picture of despair! Close them,"

she commanded, half between chaff and earnest. "Lower your eyelids. Cap the shutter of that staring camera. I sha'n't sleep a wink to-night."

He settled back in the chair, biting his lips, narrowing his eyes, fidgeting; hobbled by the multitude of internal infernal urchins that had picked the encounter; for all the world like a large, ungainly, but once sagacious mongrel fallen on sorry days.

"Thank you," laughed Céleste, leaning back against the mantel-shelf. "That's not so frightening as before. But to go on. You see, it's this way. I went on a certain fateful evening early last summer for supper to Del's with one of my former hopes and present disappointments, Gol O'Brien. The sobriquet 'Gol' is short for Goliath, this Philistine is so immense. His name is Guy. Have you met him? No? Small loss. And yet he's diverting enough for an hour in the month—huge, good-humored, pleased by anything. A son of O'Brien, the millionaire contractor, he hangs cheerfully, I am told, on the outskirts of society, hand-in-glove with the bachelors of easy views. They are very intimate with his fortune. He is, you might say, a sort of monumental pudding, surrounded by the thumbs of innumerable Jack Horners. Yes, yes; we all sponge on Goliath now and then, with the exception of two men—old friends. You shall hear about one of these two this minute."

In spite of her promise, Céleste paused. With the toe of one slipper she began to trace the immediate pattern of the hearth-rug, until at length, when its figures had possibly rendered her thoughts more symmetrical, she looked up and off in abstraction, as though to invest some far less coherent weave of circumstance with a similar lucidity of design.

Dreamily she smiled. "I am there again, and yet how obscure are the beginnings of things. We never know. We don't realize. The commonplace of life

drags on for a while after the curtain's up. It takes time to accustom one's self to the vivid colors, the fine heroics. We laugh; we don't believe. But soon, of course, it carries us away." She sighed prettily. "How tiresome a long entr'acte! Ring it up again—ring it up again! Excite me, impossible hero! Startle me into emotion! Make me yawn to hide a thrill." Pausing, Céleste smiled, then shrugged. "Oh, là-là-là!" she scoffed, with an instinctive return to the derisiveness of her girlhood. "P'tite Céleste—l'ingénue! C'est bien drôle!" She opened her eyes again to distance, determining the weave. "I suppose you know the mise-en-scène and the supernumeraries, also the cast. There sat the usual evening crowd, all the rich of both worlds, the beau-mondaine who practise the gentle art of satanics in private and the demi-mondaine of the public school.

"But across the room sat a man apart—different—unlike them all. He was well dressed and young, yet evidently individual, unconventional, obedient only to tastes of his own. All about him the tide of wine had risen to flood. Under the electric candles every glass—but who has ever described in the wine's own language a glass of champagne? A glass of champagne?" She held aloft one hand with a dashing air, thumb and forefinger together, and apostrophized an imaginary sparkle. "A glass of champagne? Ah, yes, it is a liquescent topaz, the only jewel that we drink!" She laughed at Steele. "How's that?"

He frowned heavily.

"Oh, come!" she mocked; "kindly lend yourself to the performance."

He drew down the corners of his long mouth. "I publish that sort of thing in paper covers once a week."

This she dismissed with a low laugh, keen and faint, as though her imaginary glass had touched another. "Good! I must write a novel some day." She lowered

her hand and looked down meditatively, as though into the depths of wine. "How delightful to be famous—a star—a star with slavish satellites—nice, revolving, staring, moonish people, reflecting your radiance, always around you! But I couldn't. No, not possibly." She shook her little head and pouted. "I couldn't sit down to a single page. It's different to say things and to write them." She raised again the cup of fancy. "Champagne says things." She held a little ear down to her finger. "Hear it whisper. What does it say? . . . 'I am the spirit of Paris — the pseudo-soul. I am the ghost of sunshine that dies on the fields at dusk.'" She straightened up, smiled at him, bowed him a silent toast, then, as if recklessly dashing a draught to her lips, made a pretence of tossing it down like a true bacchante. This done, she inverted her hand, with a laugh, to prove the goblet empty.

Steele relaxed with relief, hoping, now that the maddening by-play was over, she would come to the point quickly.

Noting the look, Céleste arched her eyebrows in feigned surprise. "What! Do you think that's all? Do you for an instant suppose the ghost is so easily laid? No, no; he's inside of me now! He is my own spirit, remember. . . . 'I am the spirit of Paris—the pseudo-soul. I am the ghost of sunshine that dies on the fields at dusk.'" Suddenly she frowned. "Yes, yes; but he—the youth—would have none of me. You shall hear.

"There he sat, as I say, alone, and, behold! he was drinking old ale from an earthen mug, and instead of the microscopic birds—germs of nightmare—miserably inspected by the rest, he had ordered a brace of English chops, which with a sound appetite he demolished. . . . And yet there was nothing heavy in his look, nothing stolid. Quite the reverse. Never have I seen a pair of eyes so eloquent of airy lightness, a gayety so healthy,

so natural, so free. Those eyes of his even shamed the liquescent topaz. They possessed the living sunshine—sunshine awake on the fields at dawn. That's it. He was Nature corporate—refreshing, pristine, healthy Nature; the very spirit of out-of-doors. While we—well, hardly that, you know." Her eyes fell. "He is very young—not over twenty or twenty-one, I should say—just from college. . . . I can't describe the face. It has what yours and mine can never have—what very few can have—not one in ten thousand—innate innocence, confident optimism, perennial youth. Think of it! . . ." She looked up. "Oh, là-là!" Turning, she shook her box of bonbons and pried with a finger among its contents to effect a choice. Inadequate refuge! Futile retreat! Her thoughts caught her back to the figure in the weave. "He has the look"—she mused to the sugar-plums—"the look and bearing of an Arcadian creature, unmarred, primordial, made before man had learned to name anything but the animals." She laughed, selected a creamy morsel, and touched it to her lips. "His friends call him 'Angel'; but no, that is too unearthly. To me he is a pagan god." Again her laughter tinkled like a crystal bell and she popped the dainty into her mouth.

Steele, with tardy decision, started to rise. "I am going," he said.

"What, in the middle of my story?"

"Yes, it fails to interest me."

"Wait—wait. Remember, I *may* dislike him"—her voice fell to a deeper note and her eyes were unquestionably sincere—"with a dislike more dangerous than my love. His name, by-the-way, is Enoch Lloyd."

"Enoch Lloyd?"

"Yes."

"I've heard of him somewhere."

"Oh, he's written a book." She pointed to the cloth-

bound volume on the floor. "It's called *The Greatest Good.*"

Steele nodded with aroused interest, an incident of business easing his impatience. "One of old Lee's publications. Very honorable old firm, Stephen Lee and Company. I'm thinking of buying it out for the name."

"Are you? How condescending! But to return to Lloyd again—I'm always doing so nowadays—I read a page or two and threw it there. The book bored me. It's true, the opening read like his face—high-flown, you know, and lofty. But—oh, I prefer that sort of thing in flesh and blood!" The last was said with a low kind of purr, pusslike, as though she would observe that beautiful plumage in the air is all very fine, but beautiful plumage on the ground is better. "Well, as Goliath had been to college with him, I suggested an introduction. O'Brien, the ever-obedient, went across to where Lloyd sat. Of course I could not hear their words, but this part of it I remember only too well: after O'Brien had spoken Lloyd glanced over at me, then away, and Goliath sheepishly came back alone. He muttered some lame excuse; said his friend wasn't well—tried to hide Lloyd's refusal. Yes, it was a point-blank refusal. The boy had politely declined to meet me, before my very eyes. He preferred his ale to the ghost of sunshine." Céleste laughed a short, harsh laugh, not unlike Matthew Steele's. "You can see," she said, "how pleasant it was."

Steele shrugged his sloping shoulders. "There are fools in the world."

"Wait!" She stayed him breathlessly. "Doesn't it occur to you that his reason may either have been utterly unbearable or the most flattering in the world?"

Matthew twirled the drooping mustache with his semi-forefinger. "How so?"

"The first supposition—a horrid one—is that he re-

fused because my — well, my slightly, very slightly, demi-mondaine appearance repelled his innocence. On the other hand — and here's the second horn of my dilemma—he may have had so strong a desire that he denied himself the introduction for the good of his soul! Which do you think it was?"

She turned half away, moved her shoulders, tossed her head to a piquant poise, and, lowering her lashes, looked under them sideways, as though for a moment imagination had succeeded in apotheosizing even Steele to the level of her Olympian prodigy. Deep in the shadows of her eyes glimmered a vaguely disturbing light — the light of invitation. They were far from smiling; nevertheless, the spark seemed to promise a smile, as a smile may promise a laugh. The look was luminous, intimate, veiled, sympathetic, as if it would say, "We have something in accord, you and I. We could understand each other." And the look was flattering. "I could appreciate you," it seemed to say. And tender, "I could love you." And passionate, "Youth, come to me; bring flame to flame!" And yet it was open, free, humorous, "We could laugh together, you and I." All this in a single glance, a single instant; then out went the light of her eyes. They fluttered into focus and regarded Steele with casual coldness, as though now, suddenly, his metamorphosed personality had vanished. "There!" she muttered, moodily; "even after that, milord Incomparable calmly and coolly turned away. Which do you think was the reason?"

Steele, ignoring the question, started towards her. "The very look!" he exclaimed, hoarsely. "The very glance with which—" He paused, biting his lengthy upper lip, narrowing his gaze.

"Well?" she smiled, amusedly.

"—with which you caught me."

"Caught you? I! You! *Caught!*" Her eyes flashed. "Oh, you shall pay for that word. Yes, pay dear. You shall bring him to me!"

Steele smothered an oath.

"Oh, see here," she said, more lightly; "it's nothing but a whim." She laid her hand on one of his stooping shoulders. "Surely you'll do this much. I want to meet him merely to gratify my curiosity. A caprice, that's all. I want to find out why he refused. Do you see? That's all. You will, won't you?"

Steele made a weaker objection. The touch of her hand had told. "How can I?"

"Oh, of course it must be done naturally. The thing mustn't seem far-fetched. Don't ask for an introduction. Are you apt to meet this Enoch Lloyd?"

"No—at least—that depends. Well, there's a slight chance. But why on earth should *I*—?"

"Depends on what?" she urged him, softly.

"It may possibly depend on whether or not this book of his succeeds."

"Why?"

Steele was now on his own ground. She noted a slight protrusion of the lower jaw, a facial gesture by which his chin gained strength. This is the signal of self-reliance common to those who have succeeded only by asserting themselves. It bespeaks a man whose methods in business are no less brutal than those of a pugilist in the ring.

"Why?" she repeated, gently.

"Nothing, except— You see when these youngsters fail with grand ideas and in the hands of heavy-respectable publishers, like Stephen Lee and Company, they often come to us in the end and we make them turn out salable merchandise. Dignity be damned!"

"I understand," said Céleste, thoughtfully. "*If he fails*, he may come to you." She took one of his

large, crude hands in both of her own. "Then you will introduce him to me."

He stooped weakly over her. "But why—"

"No 'buts'!" she smiled, pressing his fingers.

"Why, if—"

"'Buts' and 'ifs,'" she commented, then paused, by hesitancy to make an earlier epigram seem spontaneous. "'Buts' and 'ifs' are weeds in the garden of language. Come, say you will. He's away now on O'Brien's yacht in foreign waters. They return, I think, in the spring. If you're going to try and buy out the Lee firm, can't you meet Lloyd through one of the partners in some way?"

"There's only one—old Stephen."

"Well, through him, then." She came very close to the cat's paw. "Think what you will gain by it."

Steele kept moving his long underlip. "Does Lloyd live in New York?"

"No; somewhere in New England. He camps out, I believe, on a lonely shore, beautifully Arcadian, primitive, 'loaf-of-bread-and-jug-of-wine' sort of life, you know—only probably you don't know, being sadly ignorant of the poets. But with him there's no 'thou'—as yet. The 'thou,' you see, comes last but not least in the line quoted. It is the natural end of natural philosophy—the rhyme of reason."

Céleste laughed and screwed up her brows. "But what do I know about it? I? Nothing whatever. Only he looks like the frontispiece in a book of lyrics. And I—oh, it's all so mixed up! Very bewildering! . . . Have I ever told you about Phillipot Le Coq? No? Well, Phillipot, they say, was a gamin of Paris in about the year 1775. One night, into the room of a great writer who lived in the rue Platière—none other, if you'll believe me, than the immortal Rousseau—our friend Phillipot poked his nose, looking for food or some-

thing that would buy it. Quick as a wink was Phillipot. But quicker yet the eye of Monsieur Rousseau. 'Voleur!' cried he, and seized poor Le Coq by the nape of the neck. 'No, no, no,' sobbed Phillipot. Rousseau scowled. 'Why, then, do you—' 'Ah, m'sieur, I have heard you are such a fine poet I wanted to look at you, just to see what a fine poet is!' 'Oh, indeed?' 'Oui, oui, it's true, m'sieur; you see I've learned to make rhymes myself.' Whereupon the inimitable Jean Jacques, flattered and amazed, instantly demanded that the offender should prove his innocence by spouting forthwith a specimen of his composition. Phillipot, to the further astonishment of the poet, up and did so. You see there was a grain of truth in his plea. 'Nom de Dieu!' exclaimed Jean Jacques, 'you are a natural child of the muse, an illegitimate son'—those were his words—'an illegitimate son of the muse—straight in the line, but unrecognized. You shall go to school!' And Phillipot went to school, and Jean Jacques sent him on errands and helped him. But Phillipot ran away one day and took to the petit verre, and got miserably drunk and made love to a girl of the quais and alleys, and together they went to the devil. After which there were no more poems. The girl, by-the-way, later on, some time after her husband's patron was dead and buried, played no idle part in the Revolution, and was called 'La Fille de la Guillotine'—she loved it so! Now, who do you think those two fine rascals were?"

Steele shook his head. He had paid little attention to the story.

"They were, it seems probable—though, of course, a nobody can never be sure—my great-grandfather and great-grandmother. Père Amédée, a little old baker in the Quarter—eighty or ninety, if a day—told me his father had said so, and I might as well believe the tale as not. So you see the blood of a poet has dribbled down

to me, and I say things and think things unlike the ruck. Moreover, I've cultivated the knack of words." Céleste nodded with an unpleasantly knowing look of cupidity and calculation. "It may be very useful later on. Who knows? Words work wonders in this country, and there's no telling what I may take to if you put yourself out of the race by refusing to grant this little favor. I'll go back to financiering; or perhaps I shall start a beautiful, little, white-and-gold millinery shop in Fifth Avenue. I've often thought of that." She looked up at him, smiling. "But this won't be necessary, will it, mon cher? All you have to do is to gratify this one whim — and then — but say you will."

Steele, hopeless, made no answer. His silence was consent.

She patted his hand and released it. "I knew you would. It's nothing but a caprice; that's all."

"Then why are you so crazy to meet him?"

She glanced at the confectioner's box. "As well ask me why in the world I am so fond of nougat. Here, have one." Selecting a long, rectangular sweetmeat, she held it mischievously to his lips.

"No," he said, with a look of disgust; "the stuff is unwholesome."

She nibbled it herself. "Perhaps; but very delicious. Well, you must go now. Good-night. Oh, wait. No; never mind." It was on the tip of her tongue to suggest that Steele should casually mention to Lloyd the advantages of a little French restaurant on the south side of Washington Square which was soon to be enlarged to a boarding-house. At present it was called "The Caniche Blanc." She had an interest in the venture. But second thoughts prevailed. O'Brien would be a better medium in this instance. It is well to have even a medium unsuspecting.

Steele's brows knitted in perplexity. "What were you—"

"Oh, nothing. Don't ask questions. It was merely a matter of business. I'll tell you later. Good-night; and come again any time *after* the introduction."

He caught the hand with the nougat. "No more conditions, then?"

She shook her head coquettishly. "No more—*then*," wherewith, extricating her fingers from his huge grasp, she filliped the last little crumb to her tongue and let it dissolve slowly.

Steele turned on his heel in silence, strode out, and hastened heavily down the stairs as though he feared that some unwelcome sound—the tinkle, perhaps, of her never-forgettable laughter—might follow him to the street.

For months it had troubled Céleste, this matter of Enoch Lloyd, piquing and flattering her by turn. Either it was an insult, or the truest kind of compliment. Either this boy, who so unexpectedly had caught her capricious fancy, was indifferent or afraid. *Fear* of that sort she could readily forgive; *indifference*, never. Assuredly she must meet him and learn the truth; must meet the first puzzling enigma of masculinity—a man who had turned away.

Gliding gracefully into her bedroom, she knelt down. Her worship of the sacred image, now hanging above her head, was what may well be termed exquisite profanity. On her silver chatelaine she wore a miniature hunchback about an inch long, a sort of talisman, a porte-bonheur. So far as the superstition yet frivolity of her reverence carried her, she might have classed both possessions in the same category.

With petulant coquetry she raised her eyes and prayed that Enoch Lloyd might fail.

And p'tit Bonhomme, the dachshund, emerging gingerly from under the bed, sat there cocking an eye at her, as though wondering why his mistress should so frequently imitate his own little trick with mimic petitions to the ceiling.

Book II

I

The Return of the "Jamboree"

THE master of the light-ship woke suddenly, not from sleep, but a sort of molluscan lethargy common to cuttle-fish, oysters, and various other cogitators of the deep. He stood up and blinked at the setting sun. With eyes agape he raised a binocular. Like any dame gossip absorbed by the gaddings of her neighbors in the near-by town, Ezra Slocum kept a good watch on the passers-by. Of all these commercial craft plodding up Narragansett Bay, heavy-laden and scupper-deep, or returning again towards Point Judith and the Sound, scarcely one ever missed his notice. Their new sails, funnels, coats of paint, were no less a matter of criticism and concern to him than the new bonnets and clothes of her fellow-townswomen to the crone at the street window. If these ordinary sojourners—the prosaic barges and their kind—so kindled the gleam of curiosity in his roving eyes, how much worthier of interest the vessel he now descried.

With the sun flaming in her wake, she was speeding towards him against a background of gaudy sky, the line of smoke from her stack gilded and whirling astern, the water spuming at her stem, her long body glistening and white, like a line of coherent foam.

One look through his glass and the light-ship's master laughed aloud. Recognition slackened his facial muscles. Like an old hermit crab suddenly aware that the world contains a thing or two of interest besides the in-

terior of his shell, he looked and looked with growing satisfaction. There was no mistaking this wild rake. The prodigal had returned. On came the yacht, all roystering gayety, out of the sunset. Small need to read her name; the light-ship's master did not once direct his glass to it. He only shifted his quid from one cheek to the other, his balance from one foot to the other, and exclaimed in a husky voice, eloquent of gratification, "The *Jamboree!*"

On came the racy yacht still nearer, her appearance of speed, devilry, and sea-worth growing apparent in every line.

On she came, but now slower.

In the stern a man of large frame lay sprawled on a wicker sofa. Ezra smiled indulgently. It was the owner.

In the bow suddenly appeared another figure—youthful, free. Out to the bowsprit it sprang eagerly. Ezra chuckled with delight. He saw the young man's right arm wave high. This was enough—this wave, the touch of motion, the old familiar greeting between these two. No words. Ezra replied with a short, upward thrust of the forearm, not so much a wave as a kind of terse gesture that corresponded to "Halloa!" in words. His face did more than relax; it softened. The crab had cast its shell.

By now, as the sun sank away behind the low shoreline and colors softened into tints, the *Jamboree* faded to a more subdued harmony with the gloaming. Her speed reduced to an almost imperceptible motion, she glided forward through the haze, as though borne homeward not so much by interior mechanism as by some mystic influence of the figure in her bows.

On the bowsprit stood the young man, head thrown back, hair blowing. With a hand aloft on the stay he maintained a poise, the ethereal ongo of which suggested some ancient figure-head of Mercury.

Only when these familiar outlines were at last dissolved in the shore's long shadows at a distant anchorage, Ezra withdrew his gaze. Looking in at his cabin window, he accosted the mate laconically. "I'm goin' ashore. He's come home."

"Who?"

"Enoch Lloyd."

II

Figures on the Shore

A FIGURE stood on the shore alone. It was the waiting figure of Slocum, knotted and gnarled like an old tree, so cragged, in fact, that even the rocks about it, jutting up in grotesque outline, seemed scarcely more bleak or drear. But as the sun sank slowly and the edges of all things lost their harshness, even the solitary watcher softened more into keeping with the dusk.

It was the intermediate hour. From far away in the town of Bristol came sounds that announced cessation of labor or change of hands. The reverberating drone of the boat-shop's bell, the shrill whistle of distant factories, the sonorous strokes of a church-clock, all these in vague medley over hill and dale, then at last—no sound.

Slocum waited motionless. The skiff in which he had rowed hither from the far-off light-ship lay nosing the shore. In one hand he held its long painter, in the other a bunch of keys. Thus he waited, for all the world like an old dog, his eyes, under wire brows, watching the yacht at anchor. Others might have rowed out to her, but Ezra was molluscan still. Presently he heard a step on the grassy bank behind him, yet paid no heed whatever till a voice inquiringly addressed him.

"What boat is that?"

Slocum turned and looked up without reply. A short, oldish man, leaning lightly on a polished cane, was genially inspecting the *Jamboree*. Before, however,

Ezra's critical mind had reverted to the question, the stranger unconcernedly started to resume his stroll.

"Hey!" called Slocum.

The little old gentleman stopped with an air of surprise. "I beg your pardon," he said; "is there anything I can—"

"Wasn't you askin' about the yacht?"

The stranger looked doubtfully out to her, raised his stick and pointed to the white hull questioningly. "That boat?"

"'Course that boat."

"Perhaps I was—yes, quite possibly."

"Wal, who d' ye think's aboard?"

"I really can't imagine."

"Huh; it's Enoch Lloyd!"

"Enoch Lloyd!" (This in a voice far less absent-minded.)

"Yas. Mebbe you know the boy."

"The boy! Oh yes, yes; so I do; at least, in a way. Does he live here?"

"In a way," replied Slocum, dryly.

"May I ask where?"

"Yonder." Slocum jerked a thumb over his shoulder, indicating a small cottage, or cabin, just visible through an opening in the spring leafage. "Calls it his camp. Here's the keys."

"Ah," said the little old gentleman, "quite a hermitage. "Mr. Lloyd comes, I believe, from a long cruise."

"Yas, Chiny, Injer, and ev'rywhar, with Guy O'Brien, the billionaire. That yacht's the *Jamboree*."

"*Jamboree!*"

"Yas; boun' for Noo York."

"*Jamboree!*" repeated the stranger. "What an outrageous name!"

"Irish," observed Ezra; "signifyin' spree, bender, bat."

But the little old gentleman had already strolled away.

Slocum watched his receding figure. "Huh!" he exclaimed; "kinder wifty!" then fell again to his intent waiting.

Slowly the stranger rambled along the grassy supermargin of the shore. "Enoch Lloyd," he repeated to himself. "I shall be glad to know that man, and yet—" This thought, evidently regretful, was suddenly dispelled. He had come unexpectedly on a sight that restored the natural contentment to his face. Below him, on a large, flat rock, reclined a young girl, her figure softly visible in the gloaming. On the rock beside her lay an open book, but, with her cheek resting on one hand, she was looking off dreamily across the water. Her hair, hatless and brown-gold, was stirred slightly by the breeze. Her face he could not see, yet knew it well. Now bronzed by her few weeks in the country, it was the face of a young girl not only spiritually but also physically in perfect health. It was, indeed, this that first impressed all those who met her—this health in body and soul, this health in no way suggesting too much of the earthy, but only the earth in its springtime glory, its dawn, its *newness*—this wonderful, entire health! To-day she wore a linen dress of russet brown, which, surmounted by the hazel tinge of her hair, was but vaguely defined against the long, gray sweep of the rocky shore. In bright sunlight, dressed thus, and with her hair revealed, she had often seemed to him, her father, a figure woven of the rays; but now it was the afterglow she best expressed, a fabric of memory.

For a moment his mind went back to the mother who had borne her; then, as if to dispel the haunting lack, he stepped forward and spoke cheerfully. "Well, Marion, is it the same book all over again?"

She turned and looked up at him, still apparently

under a spell. "Yes; *The Greatest Good*, by Enoch Lloyd." He noticed that her eyes were dreamy. "Father," she said, "I don't believe that in all your forty years as publisher you have ever issued a more absorbing book. Some of the things he says I shall never forget. This, for instance," and she repeated the passage aloud: "'*The darkness of death is a gracious mystery; perhaps it is even the shadow of God.*'"

She stood up. "Oh, how I wish the author were here! I should so love to meet and know him!"

"He is—" It was on the tip of her father's tongue to say "here now," when a happier impulse restrained him. He would grant her wish, but later, in the way of a surprise. Stephen Lee was a lover of mild pleasantries. "He is," repeated that kindly gentleman—then he paused again while Marion, all eagerness to hear of the author, stepped lightly up to the bank —"a great traveller."

Pouting, she took his hand and pretended to slap it. "What a disappointment! You raised my hopes."

"I trust," he observed, with an old-fashioned formality of speech, "they may never be more seriously dashed."

The slap was now followed by a gentle pressure. She looked across the water. "What yacht is that? It's a pity I haven't the *Ariel* here. We might sail over and look at her, and go home that way."

"Never content on land, my water-witch?" He put an arm about her. "Come, it's late."

Striking inland towards a distant country road, they rambled on like youthful brother and sister, hand in hand through the pastures. Here and there cattle were waiting at the gates they passed, and once on the way a mare and her foal trotted timidly after them. The day was long in parting. Still, with luminous gaze it looked back from the west regretfully at field and flower. And

some of the flowers seemed to live for a moment in that farewell, then bowed as if to a destiny and closed their petals.

Marion carefully threaded her way in and out between them. There might be such a thing, she thought, as cruelty to flowers.

Trifles, however, were soon forgotten. The hour expressed transition, and Marion felt curiously impatient of any change. Usually each message of the hours had been more welcome than the last. Noon had ever brought that which dawn could only promise; evening that which noon could not define; night a deeper mystery than evening. Always the present had been best—always, until now. But now in this hour of twilight—this interlude—she felt an unaccountable disquiet. Like the flowers, she looked westward regretfully, as though wishing that the sun had stayed. No longer could her mood contentedly relinquish the open-hearted candor and liberty of day. A daughter of Nature, truly sylvan, loving the motherly old earth and loving the fatherly old water; loving the shore that joined as with a bond these two elemental parents, and loving with a still deeper passion the flame above, whose rays set seal to the union, was she not, after all, a child of the open daytime—a daughter of the sun? She felt perplexed—restless. Of late, her primeval simplicity had seemed to be ebbing faster and faster every evening with the light. The shadows when they lengthened appeared to be stealthily reaching out, as though bent on touching her at last.

"Do you think Enoch Lloyd is young or old?" Her question broke a long silence.

Her father, surprised by the tone, looked up inquiringly. But Marion's face was for once averted. "I have excellent reasons for believing," announced Mr. Lee, "that he is very young indeed."

She stopped short and looked up at him with wide eyes, all interest. "Are you judging only by his book?"

"No."

"Then you have heard"—her voice fell to a whisper —"something actual about him?"

The little old gentleman mysteriously compressed his lips and nodded.

Marion looked down at the grassy carpet of the meadow. A diminutive daisy was peeping up at her. Stooping, she plucked it and placed it in her father's button-hole. "What have you heard?"

He smiled indulgently. "Wait."

The smile spread to her eyes and lighted their deeper lights—spread and deepened, coloring her cheeks rose-red up even to the temples and nimbus of tawny hair. Youth had all but divined youth's close proximity. "You best of fathers!" Then a sudden wildness of impulse seemed to possess her. Running here and there, from flower to flower, she stooped and plucked them on every side. Meanwhile her father stood in the middle of the field, scarcely knowing whether to beam or frown on so telltale an abandonment to delight. Hither and thither she moved with swift but smooth restlessness, her tall and slightly rounded figure as graceful in contour as in motion. Behind her the distant woods were a shadowy background against which she moved, scanning the slope of grass, wild rose, and bayberry bushes for its most secluded treasures. In the dusk she alone was vivid—an almost classic figure, her father thought; a figure suggesting a song of the old Ionian shore. Thus, perhaps, was the Perfect Human once existent. In her lay the beauty of the utterable—mythic, Arcadian perfection—the beauty, innocence, nobility, and gladness of entire health. Never for one day had she been ill, and her mother had died long before she was old enough to comprehend and sorrow.

When at last she returned to her father her skirt was gathered up in front, revealing a petticoat and slender ankles. In the hollow of the skirt lay a profuse mass of fragrant wild flowers. Wild roses were there, and violets; anemones, buttercups, daisies. "Look," she panted —"the roses!"

He took her hand and surveyed the fingers with a quaintly troubled expression. "*You* should look," he said, pointing to a drop of crimson blood; "the roses are not all petals."

She pouted. His face, for the first time in her memory, suggested those lengthening shadows of the afternoon. "Never mind," she said, impulsively clasping the whole bundle of nosegays to her breast. "Oh, how I love them all!"

For once he failed to respond, though a love of flowers was his as well.

"They seem more beautiful"—burying her face in the mass to inhale its fragrance—"more beautiful this year than ever."

He nodded a little sadly and walked on beside her. This book by Enoch Lloyd, with its high imaginative strain of glowing ideals and youthful bravery, seemed to have worked as though with magic upon Marion. The little old gentleman, having loved in his life, was quick to read the earliest signs of a mystical influence.

Hand in hand, the two strolled homeward.

It was a peculiar trait of Mr. Stephen Lee (call it which you will, humility or negligence) that he never considered himself important enough to be an instrument of destiny. Nor yet that he could, except by gentle advice and the influence of a benign existence, affect in any way the affairs of his fellow-men. Even in bringing up his daughter, self-effacement had prevailed. Hence to-night, as usual, considering her pleasure paramount and his own position unworthy of assertion, he

wrote a letter which possibly should never have been sent.

Meanwhile another letter, quite different in terms, was being written by candle-light behind the locked door of Marion's bedroom. This, though in one sense utterly harmless, was, in another, far more dangerous than the first—harmless because never to be posted, dangerous because written at all. To indite a missive and never send it, this is the boldness of fledgling love, the first adventurous flutter of his wings. In fancy, of course, the message is signed, sealed, and forthwith posted; even it is read; almost it is answered—this first sweet letter that never goes!

Marion wrote quickly, but with great reserve; the pretence was so real, her imagination so delicately potent.

"Dear Enoch Lloyd,—Are you never coming home? I know America is your home; its destiny and youth breathe deep through every page you have written. Are you coming, and if so—when?

"Tell me this and another thing—your age. I see you in every way; you have a thousand faces. Which face is yours, I long to know—*merely as a matter of curiosity.*

"I think you are coming soon, and I have a feeling that we are to know each other—*slightly.*

"Am I right? Please answer soon. Marion Lee."

How curiously, even in this imaginary epistle, her pride would out. Notice, for instance, the guarded phrase, "merely as a matter of curiosity." And her eloquence of reserve in that one word "slightly." What naïve and childlike fancy, too, in the final demand for answer!

Blowing out the candle, she posted the billet beneath her pillow.

Marion had been so eager to write to the book's author that the book itself, forgotten still, lay open on the shore.

III

The Alighting of the Angel

EZRA SLOCUM, still waiting at the cove, finally shifted his balance. With him the motion meant something. It punctuated his inactive life.

The yacht's dingy at last was coming to the shore. With methodical slowness the light-ship's master made fast his skiff's painter to a rock. Next, as the darkness was deepening, he lighted a lantern he had brought, and then, unprecedentedly impulsive, crossed the water's edge, even up to his knees.

A long "Halloa!" came shoreward from the dingy. Ezra answered it with his laconic forearm. That gesture, as a rule, was his only medium of expression. For him on his interminable voyage at anchor—his desolate vigil while he watched over this by-path of the sea, yet never followed it — what intercourse with his fellowmen? Come they might and go they might forever, that strip of water lay always between their channel and his shoal. Only the upraised arm now and then, only a laugh, a shout, only these for friendly converse—these, and perhaps, on occasion, a brandished fist, to express the enmity of years.

"Halloa, Ezra!"

"H'loa, Enoch!"

In another moment Slocum had laid hold on the dingy's bow. There were two in the boat—a yacht's bo's'n and a young man. The latter sprang lightly ashore.

"Ez!" he cried, grasping the horny hand in both of his own. "You old cuttle-fish, how goes it?"

Slocum's lips puckered. With the eloquence of laconics he said only, "H'loa, Enoch — boy." Slowly he raised his lantern to his favorite's face, inspecting critically the blue eyes and their old, familiar smile, which alone of all things in the world could warm the cockles of his heart. "Same's ever," at last he said, with satisfaction, then glanced at the dingy, already returning to the yacht. "Whar's your frien's?"

"Coming later. I couldn't wait."

"'Course you couldn't. How long is it? 'Most a year?"

Lloyd nodded. "Look here, is there any food in camp? I've asked them to join me for a farewell bite."

Slocum chuckled. "I thought 's how you'd be hungry." He pointed to his skiff. "Cast your eye on thet." In a basket on the seat a large bluefish shimmered like silver under the lantern. "Sure's you're livin', he fastened on a drop-line. Caught him this mornin'. Guess he come in knowin' you'd be here. Don't get 'em often now."

"Good! How's the shanty?"

"Right enough. There's a few stores I put agin your comin'—meal and sech things—'nough for a dinner, I guess."

Lloyd took the bunch of keys and the lantern and led the way, light-hearted as a boy, humming and whistling as he went. Slocum, bearing the fish, stumped after him along the shore.

They were a queerly assorted couple; one airy, graceful, buoyant with the pleasure of home-coming, the other faithfully limping in his wake.

"Same's ever," repeated Slocum to himself; "jest the same."

Lloyd was, in fact, little changed; somewhat more

bronzed, perhaps, and rugged, but still the free, careless, irresponsible-looking boy of a year before.

On over the rocks he went, forgetting with youthful thoughtlessness the light-ship's master toiling far behind. Yet they had been close friends, these two, for years. In Lloyd's early childhood, what delight had equalled that of rowing out and clambering up the light-ship's side? It had seemed like mounting to an enchanted world. Those were the days after his mother's death, when his father, taciturn with grief, had sought this shelter from the world. Then suddenly the father, too, was gone; and Lloyd, under the indifferent surveillance of a distant relative, had frequently neglected school in favor of the bay and shore. In those days the great light-ship had seemed as big and unattainable as the moon, its keeper a person to worship with wondering awe. What a pinnacle of happiness, therefore, when on one of his visits Enoch had been allowed to aid in the "tending" of the light and to feel that he himself had perhaps a share in saving lives! By the hour at night he had been wont to lie out in the shadows, looking up at those long, fingering rays and dreaming of the world. By the hour he had listened to Slocum's yarns, tales of old voyages before the mast from this once busy Rhode Island port, when its commerce extended to every corner of the unimagined seas; had listened and grown to love the accompanying cable rattle, the stir of the tide against the gaunt, black hull, the tolling bell on foggy nights, and all those thousand whispers of mystery untold. But later another light had claimed Lloyd's time—another light and other mysteries—the light of his own mind, the mysteries of existence. Soon college was commanding his life, and in the summers a love of roaming. Yet often and often, as now when college was a year behind him, a certain homing instinct would draw him back to this quiet corner of Nar-

ragansett Bay, with its peaceful shore and elemental natures.

On over the rocks Lloyd went to-night, until at the verge of a copse of cedars in which his cabin stood he paused and glanced up and down, at everything and nothing, as though with a creature perception of landmarks lost on human eyes—trees, grass, shadows. Here were meanings, traits of the grove, tokens of a personal friend regained. Then—into the woods, and Slocum saw his lantern, which like a fire-fly had led the way, vanish in the dark.

When at last the light-ship's master came to the cottage, he stopped on the threshold amazed.

There in an arm-chair sat Enoch before a fire of blazing logs, the lantern on the floor, his legs crossed and feet up near the mantel-shelf, his head thrown back, a brier-root pipe between his teeth, and clouds of smoke whirling to the rafters. Judging by the sublime comfort of his appearance, he might have been at home for years.

But Slocum entered uneasily, and, picking up the lantern, peered through the tobacco smoke. "Suthin' wrong?" he said.

Lloyd's eyes opened lazily and gazed with affection at the raftered ceiling. "Sheer enjoyment, Ezra. For nearly a year I've been anticipating this identical position."

IV

The Toast that Failed

SLOCUM'S leathery face seemed positively to crackle with satisfaction. "Mebbe," he remarked, dryly eager, "you won't be so restless-like agin. I'll fetch more fire-wood. Comin'?"

Lloyd indolently shook his head. "Too comfortable. I'll be out soon. Get drift-wood if you can."

Slocum lighted a candle on the mantel-shelf, and, picking up his lantern, started to leave. As he reached the doorway Enoch stopped him. "Look here, Ezra; have you happened to hear"—he hesitated, a certain embarrassment at odds with the eagerness of his voice —"anything about— But no, of course you wouldn't know."

"Know what?"

"Never mind. I'll be out in a moment."

Slocum held the light up. "Anythin' troublin' you?"

"Yes, I'm hungry," was the evasive answer—"hungry as a bear."

But Slocum, as he went out, shook his head.

There was, however, a certain truth in this talk of hunger—hunger in an under sense. Lloyd was famished for news of a book the manuscript of which he had sent eight or nine months ago from Port Saïd to Stephen Lee and Company, Publishers, New York. After the contracts and proofs exchanged by mail there had been but a single advice. This had come about three months ago to Gibraltar, announcing the publication of *The*

Greatest Good. That was all. And yet, of course, he could not have expected more; correspondence is so uncertain when one is cruising off the beaten track. Now that the first keen pleasure of his return was more subdued, Lloyd's impatience resumed sway. He asked himself why he had not gone on at once to New York, as O'Brien, the yacht's owner, had suggested, instead of landing here. Was it because he really feared to be told of the book's fate? Compressing his lips, he answered, No. Could there be any question? The work must succeed. He had never known failure.

His face, lighted waveringly by the fire, was the very placard of a temperament. The hair, bronze-brown in color, and parted far over one temple, swept across a lofty brow. The eyes, a mystical Celtic blue, shone eloquent with deep but transient lights. On the forehead was imagination, ideality; in the eyes, high dreams. So far, so good; but below the eyes another story. The nose, irregular and crudely modelled, surmounted a mouth not wide, yet mobile, sensitive, and full. Beneath this the ruggedness of the chin, though accentuated by a central cleft, suggested a force not so much of character as of creature instincts and free will. Yet evidently the glamour of dreaming still held sway. When even the visionary lights were out there shone in his eyes, with the tranquil limpidity of a forest animal's, a barbarous love of being alive.

In short, Lloyd's was one of the many faces in which above is heaven and the earth beneath—but the earth is still an Arcady. With something of this primordial godhood and manhood (blended always, but only once perfectly balanced since the Fall) perhaps the countenance of Adam was imbued while still the sky and the garden were the only rivals in his eyes. Similarly, Lloyd's face was a page of axioms. It is, however, the part of self-evident truths to preface infinitudes. On

them rest all the anomalies. To them in the end the jaded philosopher harks back, clutching at anything that is obvious. After being lost in the infinity of problems, what a satisfaction in turning again to that clear first page of the primary scholar, and idling once more over those few simple, untroubling axioms of childhood! Then to the question, "What is life?" comes answer, "Life is life"; and the world for a spell resembles Eden. Thus is Paradise regained. Lloyd had a way of so regaining it at will. Thanks to a dangerous yet pleasant knack of his nature, he could, when wonder baffled him, fall back again on creature happiness. For this he possessed, as if by birthright, a pure, untrammelled love. His was indeed "the very spirit of out-of-doors." What magnetism! What buoyant humor! What childlike clarity of soul! This was a personality that men by indulgence and blind affection might prodigally spoil. The sheer liberty of it could not but evoke a lavish, unreasoning fondness in workaday hearts. At college they had appropriately called him "Angel," not with the slightest ironical hint of prudery, but only because of his innate unworldliness and ingenuous blue eyes. Once in Lloyd's early boyhood a gray-haired minister of the old school had stopped to look at him and ask his name. When told, the clergyman had smiled and laid a hand on the child's head. "The name is apt. It was Enoch who 'walked with God.'"

Even now the observation would have applied. Nevertheless, a lurking instability in Lloyd's expression suggested an uncertain future. His face foretold extremes. Friends of his own age held high hope for him; older friends both hope and fear. As for himself, the hope possessed him dangerously. To him discretion was not the better part of valor, or seemed, perhaps, no part of it at all. Discretion was too apt to signify cowardice, merely slavery—so far.

His moods were broadly divided into two kinds—those of a genius and a child. For hours absorbedly he would strive, with glowing but groundless theories, to shape the millennium in his mind. Nothing was better, thought he, than to loaf and invite one's soul. Whither tended humanity? he dared to ask himself, who knew little or nothing of the world. Vainly, but with a strange, futuritial tendency, he would project his dreams forward into the dim obscurity of unimagined epochs; on and on, striving to trace the course of the republic, to determine the trend of this democracy, this vast mortar of compounding races, its pestle in the hand of—whom? If the metaphor of the mortar pleased him, the metaphor of the pestle perplexed him to the core—that pestle ever stirring, silently, endlessly stirring, the myriad incompatibles into a perfect blend. . . . The pestle was held by whom? By one giant nature after another? No; none is great enough for that. By the genius of democracy — the people corporate and individual—humanity itself? *Perhaps!* A thousand times he said "perhaps," and yet he doubted if even humanity's hand could wield the pestle of its own life. Was there not a Chemist greater still?

Thus on the threshold of the laboratory he stood curious and confused. This was the mood of the genius in him; oftener came the mood of the child. In an instant he was capable of becoming all gayety, even folly, with a sort of mental capering and unrestraint. Did the philosopher's stone seem more than ever unobtainable, on in a moment with the cap and bells!

So to-night, in swift transition, he was running all the gamut of his moods. The touch of the familiar shore had seemed to electrify his step; the feel of this armchair brought a quieter emotion.

At last he looked about the room, dwelling with a long gaze on the rough-hewn table that served for meals

and study, the worn floor, the brick chimney-place, lacking mortar; the narrow, rickety stairs, the shelves of well-thumbed books, and, lastly, through his window out to the great ship's light he knew so well. For him these objects held an inexpressible charm. No matter how commonplace they might be, he had a certain animal affection for familiar things — liked the hearth-rug with a dog's liking; the bare yet comfortable room as a horse might love its stall. Thus these; but for the natural things of earth a widely different fondness. For them no browsing friendship, no mere content at thought of the wooded shore, the rocks, the stretches of water, the stars, the evening air. Nor was there anything depictive in this other feeling, anything whatever of the artist's view. This was no æsthetic admiration for scenery, no flattery for the mere costume of Nature, but the love of a man for Nature's heart.

Finally, as if drawn again by that spell, he rose and went out to join Slocum.

It was before his return that two men, just landed from the yacht, entered his cabin. One, Cuthbert Morton by name, presented a meagre appearance. For a moment he stood in the doorway, his pinched face, lit by the firelight, suggesting a mentality of narrow force, while a pair of small, glancing eyes, close together behind rimless glasses, bespoke, as it were, a sinewy mind, a character composed of wirelike fibres; and his skin was almost translucent on the brow.

The second comer, a large, loose-framed fellow, who unceremoniously shoved the first before him into the room, was different enough to seem the very opposite of his friend. Sprawling and oppressively large, with a heavy but humorous face and blunt features, he bore appropriately the sobriquet "Goliath," the common abbreviation of which was "Gol."

Morton peered about the room in surprise. "Not here! Where on earth—"

O'Brien seated himself comfortably in the arm-chair. "Moonshining, I'll bet. Sit down." It was characteristic of O'Brien that he disliked any one to break his interminable lethargy by appearing to be any more active than himself.

Cuthbert closed the door and drew a chair close to his companion. "Bother it all," he said, in a low voice. "D' you suppose he's had bad news?"

The answer, drawling but brief, suggested crude convictions. "Hell, no!"

"I'm not so sure," pursued the other, evidently of a controversial turn. "The book's *too* good—too impractical."

O'Brien, lighting a long cigar, blinked at the fire; then, emphatically: "*He* fail? Never!"

But Cuthbert rose uneasily, and, going to the window, shook his head. What if, after all, the book had fallen flat—the work that had so vitally absorbed his friend? What if it had come to ridicule—or, even worse, to sheer oblivion? He dreaded to consider the effect of this possibility. Scenes recurred graphically to his compact mind. He saw Lloyd writing the last pages, his face alight with hope. Well, Enoch had never failed. Seemingly, failure was impossible to him. Yet wherein lay this element of success? Always unable to define Lloyd's power, he lamely termed it a gift of words. Himself a prominent essayist and critic, he could, nevertheless, not well appreciate the purely imaginative mind. Mentally he danced at the death of romance. He was modern to the core. By nature a critic of piercing insight who wrote for the leading reviews, he filled the part of a moral pathologist, a keen diagnostician of social, political, and literary wrongs. His opinions counted about as much as can those of any publi-

cist in so diversified a democracy. Essentially scientific, he spoke of religion as metaphysics, of charity as philanthropy, of the moral law as the ethical code, of God as x in the cosmic problem. He was bigotedly broad, intolerant of all intolerance, mathematical to the marrow of his bones. He was the old fanatic in the new guise—a devotee of veritism. The day of ideals, he said, was passing; the day of ideas had come. Naturally, therefore, the wayward mind of Lloyd, with all its color of romance and contemplative trend, seemed to him mediæval and unworthy of so advanced an age. It would not conform to any rote; could not be measured with exactitude; and so he denied its efficacy. A thing of vague beauty perhaps it was, yet obviously anarch to rules of thought or science and wholly useless as a force in life. But occasionally, beyond this easy dismissal, the genuinely critical and estimative faculty of Morton would assert itself. At these moments he could not but acknowledge a certain inherent potency in the work of Lloyd. Granting, for the sake of argument, that fiction and fancy may be seriously pursued, this was imaginative literature of a high order. For the sake of liberality he must acknowledge Lloyd's talent. So, at least, he would have said, to account for moments of unguarded admiration; but the truth of it was that somewhere down deep under the wire net-work that seemingly served him for veins, nerves, and tendons, there existed a weak spot of softer stuff, and Lloyd, several years his junior, unconsciously had a trick of touching it at random.

Yet, curiously enough, even Goliath could better appreciate Lloyd. His spongy mind contained no logic to take offence at the idealism of their friend. Imagination, no doubt, was a kind of eccentricity, a species of mental wild oats. The sheer laziness and bigness of the thing appealed to him. Once Morton, definitive always, had

described Lloyd's nature as "a sort of epic in runes." It was perhaps this very crudity and largeness, this barbaric poetry of Enoch's character, that, queerly enough, touched in Goliath a kindred chord; harking back, possibly, to some old Celtic ancestor who had invented songs.

Cuthbert, hearing a chuckle from O'Brien, turned jerkily. "What are you laughing at?"

"Oh, nothing." He pointed to a familiar photograph of the assembled members of their college fraternity chapter who were now looking down at them from over the book-shelves. "I was thinking of you and Angel in college."

"Well, what—?"

"Of that prize debate between you."

"Oh!" In Morton the recollection seemed to inspire little amusement.

"What was it on?" pursued Goliath, ruthlessly. "All I can remember is that *he* won."

"Yes, and yet I had shown concisely—"

"Of course! You were always devilish concise."

"I had shown logically—"

("And logical as sin!")

"—that Enoch's side was dead wrong. My argument was sound from start to finish. He could not answer my questions."

("Lord, I hope not!")

"But up he stood, and I saw then how the vote would go. It's all that way of his—the divine-afflatus business, you know."

"The what?"

"Oh, his seraphic face. But this won't carry him through in writing. He may have failed."

"Thunder, no!"

"I tell you," repeated Cuthbert, testily, "he may have failed!"

"S-sh! Here he comes."

Morton turned quickly to the window. "No, it's Tom."

For a moment the controversy was interrupted by the entrance of a sailor from the *Jamboree*, a big, brawny, up-standing seaman of the kind they breed on the coast of Maine. "It's here, sir," said he, with a wave of his lantern towards the doorway.

"That's good; bring it in." Tom went out, and returned presently rolling across the threshold a cask of wine. "Put it there under the stairs and leave your light." Then, after they were again alone, "Lord, I hate darkness!"

"Yes, it is rather gloomy here—nothing but a candle."

O'Brien kicked at the logs. "Especially gloomy with a raven for company."

Cuthbert frowned. "Well, I can't help thinking how probable it seems that he has failed."

At this there came a burst of laughter from the doorway, and Enoch, staggering under an armful of firewood, surveyed them amusedly, while Slocum, similarly freighted, peered through the window from outside.

Morton was nothing daunted. "I'm not sure," he persisted, presuming as usual on his seniority, "it wouldn't in some ways be a mighty good thing."

Again that laugh, as though at an arrant absurdity, while Enoch, now followed by Slocum, threw down his burden on the hearth.

"The crow," drawled Goliath, "has been cawing again."

Lloyd nodded, and surveyed the cask under the stairway.

"What's—"

"Oh, it's a barrel of Xerez. I thought you'd be glad to have a souvenir of the cruise, you know."

"Thanks, I remember it well. Best in the world. But come, give us a hand."

And now they fell to work, each assuming the share allotted to him by the youngest of all, but the oldest at the knack of camping. Slocum cleaned the large blue-fish, Enoch stirred a bowlful of meal and water, while Cuthbert prepared the table, and Goliath, with much ado, drove a spigot into the wine-cask.

"Anyway," observed Lloyd, "I've solved the servant problem. I don't have any. It's the best way—that is, if you know how, which I do. Nice hang-out, isn't it?"

"Fairly," returned O'Brien, who had never labored so diligently before. "But I prefer a hotel."

Hereupon the others laughed immoderately. It seemed queer to Cuthbert that the son of a self-made man should be thus playing ducks and drakes with an energy which, in him, was dying of self-indulgence. And it seemed still more paradoxical that Lloyd, evidently of a stock long cultured, should prefer this barbarous outdoor life, whereas Goliath, obviously an offspring of Irish peasantry, held the comforts of civilization above all things dear.

"Don't know what the dickens I'd do," added O'Brien, struggling valiantly with bit and augur, "if the old gentleman hadn't made a fortune!"

From others this remark, hinting of a present comparison, would have been insufferable, but somehow the great good-humor of Goliath excused him always.

Finally the preparations were complete, except the cooking.

"'Night," said Slocum, abruptly. "Light needs tendin'."

Lloyd went to the door with him and looked off at the ship that was called a home. "Won't you wait and have supper?"

"Nop; carn't."

"Well, I'll be out there soon. I've some work on a

new book. I'll come as I used to, Ezra, and help you ''tend ' light."

"You will? How soon?"

"Oh, in a day or two."

"Wal, don't fergit." And before long, as Lloyd went about the room, he saw the master's lantern, a dim glimmer through the window, gliding down the bay.

Presently Enoch dipped his spoon into the concoction of Indian meal, and carefully proceeded to drop a white, wafer-like splotch on a frying-pan.

"What is that?" queried Cuthbert, as he sniffed the savory air. "It looks like a poker-chip."

"Perhaps," suggested O'Brien, drawing hungrily nearer, "this is a jack-pot."

Lloyd made a gesture of disdain. "No, it's not a jack, it's a johnny—ahem!—a johnny-cake!" and he ducked his head behind the spoon as if fearing missiles from the audience.

Goliath guffawed, while Cuthbert, though assuming a pained expression, gradually relaxed. The occasional inanities of Lloyd had such an absurdly light-hearted ring. Sometimes Morton almost wished that he himself could afford to be thus genially idiotic.

The drivel, as he called it, continued. "I tell you," said Enoch, holding up his spoon between droppings, with the air of a lecturer, "the Rhode-Islander is a born gourmet—also a gourmand. What with clam-bakes, chowders, bannocks, and, last but not least, the sublime johnny-cake, he fills an exalted rank among epicures. He does it so humbly, too—with so little assumption of an air, so democratic a simplicity!" Lloyd bent over the bowl and stirred rapidly. "In some ways there's no chef in all Paris can equal a Rhode Island housewife." (This with a final and decisive *clip-clop* of the spoon.)

"Oh, come now—" began O'Brien.

"S-sh!" put in Cuthbert; "these cooks will have their eccentricities. He's quite harmless."

"I had an uncle," pursued Enoch, loftily holding his frying-pan over the blaze, "who took one of these crisp, simple-looking johnny-cakes as a model all the way to Paris in a box. But, alas! it could never be reproduced. One night from the hands of the chef appeared as entremet a something that looked like a cross between a charlotte-russe and a poached egg. And what, think you, that infamous cook had the impudence to call it? Proudly he proclaimed the monstrosity 'Gâteau de Jean.'"

At this there came a second burst of laughter from Goliath, and Cuthbert chirruped like a sparrow.

Lloyd gently turned the cakes over on the pan. "Oh, those French may be master impressionists in the culinary art, but for genuinely comforting, urbanely satisfying concoctions, give me New England every time. You must eat a Parisian creation by gas-light, but with us the noble Indian has left his mark. These things taste all the better in the woods. Here, Cutty, hold this—so!"

As the fire had now died down to a deep, glowing bed of embers, Lloyd, having transferred the frying-pan to his scullery maid, laid the bluefish between the bars of a gridiron and held it aloft as though it were a flag. "Oh, sovereign fish"—this with eyes reverently cast upward—"you reign supreme! There are those who vow allegiance to the lordly salmon, and those who dally with the piquant trout. We can but pity them. You only do we serve." He thrust the gridiron forward dramatically over the embers. "And you shall be served as befits your excellence, within three paces of the fire!" Hearing a vicious sizzle from Cuthbert's frying-pan, he turned quickly. "Hang it, they'll burn! Turn them over! Take them off! Get a plate, Gol, as you value your appetite!"

So proceeded the preparation of that immemorial repast, until before long the low-studded room was filled with so redolent and savory an odor that the very air conveyed a taste.

Goliath and Morton seated themselves, striving to appease their impatience by the consumption of this intangible hors d'œuvre.

Thank Heaven, at last the fish was cooked! Rushing to the table, Enoch flung open the gridiron and seized a fork. "Gentlemen," he began, waving that implement with an oratorical flourish of triumph, "from the cafés of Europe we have come—" He paused, glancing down sideways at Goliath, who, as he leaned far forward, with capacious mouth already opened and fists clinched upon knife and fork, presented a picture of hunger at top pitch. "From the cafés of Europe—" repeated Enoch, winking at Cuthbert; then again he hesitated, and this time his face fell. A keen realization of contrasts seemed to rob him all at once of enthusiasm. The speech, begun with an air, now petered out in doleful accents. "From the cafés of Europe we have come *down* to this! How odious are comparisons! No wonder you prefer hotels!" Gazing ruefully at the fish, he reclosed the broiler, and next, as if under a sudden impulse of scorn for such humble fare, bore it quickly to the door. "No! I haven't the effrontery to offer you so barbarously cooked a meal. I've got it! We'll take a train to Newport. It's only an hour. You'll enjoy that much better. Come!" With which he reopened the gridiron as though to fling its unworthy contents upon the ground.

Rising in a heavy panic, Goliath strode over to him and seized the grill. "Confound it! Your eccentricities go too far. Blest if I—" But then as he returned ravenously to the table there came a shout of laughter from the doorway, and Goliath, slow of wit but large of

humor, joined in the joke against himself with a burst of Homeric mirth. Meanwhile Cuthbert chirped appreciatively and munched the crispest cake; and Enoch filled their glasses at the barrel.

Then—silence. The beau-ideal of a supper had been reached. What better—what half so good? Verily even the immortal first roaster of pork scarce knew deeper rapture than this of theirs. Here as beverage was the long-voyaged Xerez wine, with its nutty tang, its old-time melody of flavor. How pleasantly it blended the edibles within; how magically it mellowed friendship!

And the smell of the wood embers, and the smell of the cedar grove, delectably permeant, added an indescribable relish to the meal. Small wonder that for a time inadequate words were few; small wonder that at the end of so light yet Epicurean a supper adequate words were many.

Already Goliath's opinion concerning camps and roughing it had changed. "Hang it all! Why did the old man make money?"

Even Cuthbert relaxed into a limited benevolence. For once he had stopped playing intellectual policeman to his friends. "A toast to Angel—the success of his book!"

"Yes!" (This in the tones of a true Philistine.) "Here goes, and no heel-taps!"

With a gay gesture of response, Enoch raised his wine-glass.

Suddenly there came a sharp rap on the door. He paused. The knock was repeated. He set down his glass, and, opening the door, looked out. A tall, thin man automatically thrust forward a black-sleeved arm. The hand, bony and long, held a note. Enoch took it. The messenger withdrew into the darkness. Enoch shut the door, and, crossing to the lantern, read hastily:

"Dear Mr. Lloyd,—While walking on the shore to-day I saw Mr. O'Brien's yacht. From an old fisherman who seemed to be waiting for you I learned that by an odd coincidence we are to be near neighbors. I have just inherited from a brother the old place known as 'The Orchard,' situated immediately across the water from your cottage. Will you dine with us here at seven to-morrow? It will give us great pleasure to meet you personally.

"I trust you received my letter forwarded with some uncertainty to Gibraltar. You cannot regret more than I the failure of your book. That both critics and public have left it so severely alone seems indeed inexplicable. I should like to hold out some small encouragement to you regarding it, but, alas! in these days when all things move so quickly, the book, I fear, would certainly have succeeded already, had it been going to succeed at all.

"Sincerely yours,

"Stephen Lee."

As Enoch came to the end they saw his face go deadly white; he trembled. Then with unusual precision he folded the letter. "Invitation to dinner," he told them, lightly; but for once the careless voice and manner contained an artificial note—a note which, first altering his voice in that moment of disappointment, began to sound the under discord of his life.

He raised his glass again. "A different toast. Not to the Angel, but"—he smiled strangely—"to the devil himself! The amusing part of it is—I have failed."

V

The Boat of Dreams

LLOYD drained his glass, and, turning his back on the others, stood silently looking down at the fire.

Morton's lips were compressed close; with the fingers of one hand he tapped nervously on the table. Goliath drew a cigar from his pocket, and, without lighting it, mouthed the wrong end. They saw Enoch shrug his shoulders at the embers. A moth flew in at the open doorway and fretted the candle-flame. The monotonous stir of the water expressed their moods. Enoch's silence forbade comment.

Morton was the first to rise. He spoke to Lloyd's back. "Time to turn in. Take care of yourself."

When Enoch turned, O'Brien rose heavily and clapped a hand on his shoulder. "Damn shame!" he ejaculated. "Rotten shame!"

Lloyd smiled vaguely. "'Night, Gol! 'Night, Cutty! Remember me to the people in New York."

He followed them to the doorway in silence. Dumbly taking their leave, they clambered down through the darkness to the shore, where O'Brien turned to wave good-bye. But the door of the cabin was already closed.

Enoch seated himself in the arm-chair. The fire was about dead now, and the room seemed chilly. Once or twice he shivered, but sat for an hour or more inertly, until at last, when a word began to shape itself and take on coherency, he rose, went out, and walked along the shore.

Failure! He repeated it mechanically at first.

Presently he stood still and shuffled pebbles about with one foot.

Failure! The word drilled through consciousness, deeper and deeper, with keen precision.

He picked up a white stone, and, not unlike some novitiate in magic of old, held the pebble in his palm, gazing down at its faint translucence as though here were the crystal ball that held an image of his future. His thoughts needed the white spot as a point on which to concentrate.

Failure! He let fall the stone. It struck a spark from the others at his feet. Thus, perhaps by accident, came the primeval discovery of an element. To-day nothing could have been more commonplace, yet the flash seemed to kindle a train of metaphor in his mind. He mused crudely. Fire from stone? Wherein lay the significance of that? Here were meanings . . . contact . . . to touch and be touched. Thus only could the spark be struck. This was the threadbare lesson that Cuthbert Morton had so long been hammering into his mind; the need of contact, mutuality, hard knocks. Now, as ever, the lesson bored him. His mental roaming and way of aloofness were not to be forsaken on behalf of irksome discipline and fact. How often had Morton said, "You have not lived life, not a single day of it, yet you have dreamed of ages!" To this, in the full pride of imagination, he had answered with a lofty smile. Always the abstract had possessed him; theories, generalities — "glittering generalities," as Morton had termed them in the cant phrase of the Onerous Practical.

He walked on. The rocks, slippery and jagged, began now for the first time to vex his temper. He ascended to the grassy bank above the shore. Here he sat down, then lay, half reclining on one elbow, his eyes upon

the ground. Long he gazed listlessly at the starlit earth, the stuff of which all men are made. Glancing from clod to clod, he defined them in the figurative sense; called men by that name. Gradually his metaphors grew mixed. He became lost amid the contradictions of little things. From these his mind reacted. He looked up dreamily at the sky. . . . No, he would never set ear to the cogs of common things. Was it not more glorious to call the world a sphere and listen to its note in the harmony of stars? Why, at all, had affairs of the earth laid hold on him—questions of the national life, theories, modern economics, and the like? Should not he have been the poet, purely—a timeless nature, above, apart? . . . He did not perceive the deterrent cause, was not aware that hidden somewhere deep in him lay that love of recognition which, having found itself gratified in those first immature college debates, had led him on blindly in ambition's course. From the evening when first he had been applauded by his limited college world, from the very moment when first a pair of hands had clapped for him, his character had changed. Those hands, in a way, had begun to shape his destiny.

He began to regret now that he had considered so deeply the social scheme. Yet on one score he could not reproach himself. He had given to the book his best, the very best that was in him up to the present time. Even Cuthbert Morton, the ever-critical, could not question that. But of what avail was his best? It had not even gained a hearing, much less brought home a single truth. . . . Nevertheless, a blind instinct told him to struggle on, to harness these forces in him and render them serviceable to his fellow-men. . . . And yet . . .

For the moment he felt helplessly indefinite and of no real use. The first hint of a fatal question—the most fatal, perhaps, that he could have asked himself—now found expression in his mood. "Is it worth while?"

When the first shock of failure had passed he gazed off and around, lending himself to influences of nature. He felt the night. It cast an inchoate spell over his mind. This, in truth, was night; this was very night. . . .

Seemingly day had died into oblivion years before, and this was the ultimate hour. With the sun had gone bodily toil and questions of living; with the stars came spiritual travail and the enigma of life. . . .

The leaves and waters in their murmur seemed to be expressing wonder concerning the nature of Nature's self. But this was the only whisper—this questioning—ceaseless questioning; there came no deeper tone. . . .

The ritual of Nature was in effect. For many there is no mystery in these rites—in the candles above . . . the vague chant . . . the celebrant trees. For others there is nothing else. To the listener there comes at least a hope of ultimate solution; to the deaf, of dissolution, and no more. Some in the active daytime, wasted by the fever of doing, now experience the deeper restlessness of being, and mystery inspires dreams.

It worked so now.

Dream-things rose around him. With occult incoherency the hour impressed itself deep on his plastic mind. At first, while the breeze whispered, and the moon sailed slowly up from behind the eastern shore, and the stars paled at her coming, he began for the thousandth time to give all this a voice. But then he recalled with vague misgiving how thus always his thought had put on language, and abstractions had rushed to a flood of words. Was he not fatally facile in receptivity and utterance? Was he not, after all, but a sensitive medium of effect, a reflector and echoer of externals? Was he not, indeed, all impression and expression—shallow as a mirror?

Stretching out at full length on his back, he again looked up at the heavens. The platitudes of age are the

discoveries of youth. Once again those planets overhead, with their blind obedience and tranquil yet eternal motion, impressed their parable on a youthful mind. . . . He must blindly pursue his course . . . must, like them, perpetually move to shine at all, and share, however humbly, in the lighting of the world. The truths of youth are the truisms of age. He was struggling to master the alphabet of wisdom.

With the break of day he would begin anew . . . plod on . . . and yet — he paused suddenly. *Plod?* The word was utterly distasteful. Once more that lurking, insidious question, "Is it worth while?"

This time he found no positive answer, but gradually, as if some outside influence were at work, he experienced a strange disquiet. A sound so low as to seem only psychical, or at most the stir of a current, stole upon his mind. Finally, as it assumed a meaning, he turned to face the bay.

From across the stretch of water curving in between Mount Hope Point and the eastern shore of Bristol glided a small, white thing, scarcely more tangible at first than the wayward reflection of a star. Slowly this object shaped itself until it became a small sail-boat making for the point near which he lay.

Almost imperceptibly the craft drew nearer, till at last, being luffed up to the leeward of a projecting rock on the beach, the sail stirred listlessly and a figure stepped ashore.

The form was feminine, its grace, in motion and outline, eloquent of youth.

For a moment the figure bent forward, as if making fast the boat's painter to a craggy portion of the rock. At first Lloyd could not discern the young girl's face. She approached his position slowly, her head and shoulders being slightly inclined downward, as though she were seeking something on the shore. With hesi-

tating steps, and looking now here, now there, she approached nearer and nearer to the rise from which he viewed her.

Vaguely he began to wonder concerning this apparition, her identity and quest. In his present half-somnolent lassitude he felt little or no surprise. Ordinarily the sight of a young girl sailing alone at night and landing here on so sequestered a shore would have amazed him, but to-night anything seemed possible. The episode possessed the usual extravagance of a dream. He felt no desire to awake. Fancifully he told himself she was only a spirit of evening . . . some barbarian of a long-lost tribe, haunting the scenes of her lifetime.

At last, almost immediately beneath his vantage-point, she stooped lower and her hand reached down.

Instinctively Lloyd's eyes sought the object which he knew she must have found.

There on a flat rock it lay, just visible—a book, open at the title-page.

He leaned over the bank's edge and strained his eyes. To have read unfamiliar words would have been impossible, but these two, alone distinguishable in the moonlight, met his gaze: Enoch Lloyd.

It was the author's name—his own!

With a motion of pleasure she raised the book; then, to his indescribable delight, pressed it to her lips and for an instant held it so. The act was like an opiate to his recent wound. A dazed wonder took possession of him—half awe. Beyond doubt it was all a dream . . . phantasmagoria, in which the muse—embodied inspiration—had come to acknowledge him as hers.

His feet touched the rocks. Somehow the contact rendered consciousness more concrete. An exulting rush of satisfaction overwhelmed him. Here was at least one spirit that recognized his own!

He stepped down, speaking some word that he could never afterwards recall.

Startled, she glanced swiftly up to him. Then for the first time he saw her face. But the complexity of the moment blurred ordinary perception; his retina failed to retain a single feature; only the expression of her face impressed his mind.

"I am Enoch Lloyd," he found himself saying, naïvely as a school-boy; "the book is mine."

At this, a low cry of surprise escaping her, she started back, only to pause, wondering. His eyes sparkled as he noticed that her hands clasped tight the book.

A new power, all-wonderful, indescribable, all-mysterious, ineffably exalting, seemed to be weaving a spell on the loom of night. Magic was alive again. The ghost of some ancient necromancer stalked abroad. And old Dame Nature, ever dabbling in witchcraft, was at his call. Things of the sky and shore were abetting his enchantment. Everywhere rose whispers of conspiracy. Already the breeze, conjurer-like, had flourished forth a veil of cloud and blindfolded the moon.

Enoch's face, thanks to the translucency of that cloud behind his visitor, was not invisible; hers was. The position favored her. Yet gradually, as the full truth dawned in upon her mind—his actual personality supplanting some image preconceived—she seemed to grow more tangible, until at last her eyes, meeting his, became luminous with recognition.

She stepped close to him.

Suddenly he could hear her breath, its come and go—the whisper of real life. Suddenly he could read her eyes, the message of their light—the response of a kindred nature.

Now she was no mere presence, but a vivid woman, human as himself, breathing the same night air, loving the same life, instinct with the same vitality.

She had given the lie to failure; nothing else mattered in the world.

The enthusiasm of his volatile nature, ebbing and flowing with every mood, rose now to full flood. Mere being surcharged his veins with fire; living was its own reward.

He stood motionless, waiting for some word.

"The book is yours," she said, as if complying against her will—"yours and *mine*." Then turning, she walked slowly to the boat.

Spellbound by that reply, Enoch stood for a moment motionless, looking after her. But suddenly a sense of loss quickened impulse. She was fading away into the night.

He hastened to pursue.

Already she was out on the rock to which her boat lay moored. He could see her figure, an intangible shadow, while she stooped to cast loose the rope.

Once more she was a phantom.

Aflame with a desire to prevent escape, he speedily gained the mooring; but now the shadow, with a silence almost spectral, passed across the yawl's gunwale, then down, and vanished behind the sail.

He reached his hand out towards the boat. Its bow fell away and beyond his reach. Without a second's hesitancy he waded thigh-deep into the water and spoke imploringly to the shadow now visible in the stern.

Its face was averted.

He stood up to his waist in the current, his eyes deeply earnest with a plea.

For an instant the little craft hung poised in the wind, tentative, as though itself lacking resolve; then, before he could reach it, the stem went off a point or two, the sail began to draw, it filled, and suddenly—away!

Lloyd turned back with a look of almost desperate disappointment. Long he watched the receding craft, watched it wonderingly, until—out on the dark water, whither-bound he could not tell—it and its shadow pilot dissolved into the night.

VI

The Footprint of Reality

LLOYD'S isolated cottage, probably hereafter to be used only as a camp for headquarters between periods of roving and to please him by the name of home, was fast succumbing to a wild, reckless vegetation which, clambering over the walls, seemed bent on claiming the entire structure as its own. Riotous tendrils, all unkempt, mounted to the low roof; wild roses, honeysuckle, wistaria, clematis, jostling and blossoming amid decay. Here was positively a stampede of flowers—trellises broken, eaves twisted, shingles torn asunder by a swarm of prodigal vines whose buds were bursting into life.

The site of his dwelling was the sunny side of a wooded promontory reaching out into the bay. Before him lay the secluded cove, its border a crescent of pasture and meadow-land. Behind him, screened by a strip of trees, ran the main channel. Dominating the shore of his little peninsula, a hill swept up from a fringe of cedars to a bare peak. On the summit, according to legend, stood once on a time the seat of an Indian chief. Even still he seems to haunt the place—Philip and his swarthy subjects. Near the shore to-day, discoverable at rare intervals, lie the stone corn-bowls and grinders of his women, together with the arrow-flints and axe-heads of his men. At night, when the moon is high, it requires no great flight of fancy to imagine the hill repopulated with his tribe. About the base those dusky cedars sug-

gest a cordon of defence; while here and there above the camp, picketing the bare summit, two or three solitary fir-trees, dark against the pallor of the slope, stand stern, as if to sentinel a throne.

Here Dame Nature, ancient of nurses, seems lost in reminiscent mood. Here, cronelike, she whispers folklore to the later born.

Save for Enoch's cottage, there was now no dwelling on the southern slope. The place was wild. Purposely he cultivated none of it. Despite the cackles of Cuthbert, he held peculiar views—impractical and preposterous notions—concerning what he termed the "immaculacy of woodland"; its "vestal privilege." One day, with "beautiful insanity," as Cuthbert called it, this poet-errant even up and declared, "Agriculture where Earth withholds herself is sheer rapine." To this the prosist, logically, "Why, then, plant even flowers in untrammelled soil?" Thereupon, from the scatter-brain for answer, several couplets, wherein it was set forth with fitting rhythm and embellishment that flowers to these hallowed spots are no more than love-songs to a maid; that while the votaries of Flora lend to Earth a virgin color, those of Ceres bring a woman's pain.

Such, we must confess, were the absurdities of the Angel.

In summer, however, he called this planet by a different name. Truly Earth is as varied as her offspring; all things to all of them; a different Earth to every man and every season. Another couplet, if you please, heralded the change. Therein was the mother of us all, irreverently metamorphosed from "maid," at the end of the first line, to "jade," at the end of the second. And who to blame for this imbecility but June? What save the smell of the pines, the breathing breast of the water, the feel of turf, the insect drone? Who but the drowsy jade herself, opening her arms to summer?

Small wonder he loved this Arcady; small wonder he disliked the name of town!

Nevertheless, he was close to civilization—ominously near the "cogs of common things." By rounding Mount Hope Point he could stand on the northeastern side of the promontory, and, with his back to the nook of primitive earth, could look across the water and see the modern world epitomized.

There, on the opposite shore, was a small commercial city. Instead of a thousand fir-trees pointing to the sky, a forest of chimneys blackened it. No contrast could have been sharper. Here the bay seemed to be stretching out an arm to divide the ages.

And Lloyd lived snugly on the idle side. His cottage might well have been a world away. Sheltered by the strip of woods, its back was turned to the odious factories, its face to the quiet cove.

The rays of the sun were just aslope across this inlet when Lloyd awoke on the morning after his arrival.

Rising, he looked out from the window, down to the cove, off over the waterway that lay unrolled like a golden tape between the shores. The air was windless. He could tell by the motionless host of leaves in an opposite orchard, the slothful sail of a fisherman's cat-boat, and lastly by a cloud of smoke, low-hanging to the southward, which perhaps marked the trail of the *Jamboree*, for the yacht had gone. Save for a few insignificant craft—skiffs and improvised sail-boats—the bay was at present deserted, Slocum's light-ship more than ever alone. Across the cove a herd of cattle were dully browsing near the water's edge. High above them a fish-hawk rose from its nest on a naked oak-tree and flapped the sleep from its heavy wings.

Lloyd frowned at that shore resentfully.

There, between pasture and orchard, stood an old colonial mansion, crowning the slope. Hitherto this

fair, white dwelling, with its lofty Doric columns and look of a larger age, had ever been good to see. Until now he had only bemoaned its emptiness. In childhood, when in adventurous moments he had set foot on the low veranda and nerved himself to peer between the shutter-slats, those columns had towered above him, big as Herculean pillars holding up the sky. And the dark, inexplorable interior had assumed in his mind a like immensity. It had belonged, when he slept, to a house of dreams. Time and again some nightmare had conveyed him thither and locked him in the dark. Then he would dream that he stood there listening and terror-struck, tight-strung in the midst of the silence, listening. Afraid to hear, yet straining his ears; afraid to stir lest the floor should creak—always listening! Or again in a dream he would stand there, fearing to see some shape, yet torturing his eyes at every corner. And all the time he knew the vigil to be vain—the presence was behind him! If it touched him he would die. Oh, that a ray of light might come in at the shuttered windows! Often and often, in the frenzy of nightmare, he had prayed and pleaded for a single sunbeam.

To all those dreams there had never been a climax. The dreaded sound had never come, nor yet the fearful presence, nor yet—he paused in the recollection—no, nor yet the light he needed.

House of Dreams; House of Life; House of the Incomplete!

Musing thus, Enoch frowned. The new and living occupant seemed little more conducive to tranquillity than ever had his formless predecessor. The vicinity would still be haunted. By what ironical fate had Stephen Lee, the publisher, come here to live—the man of all others whose proximity would recall failure? That gentleman, as yet unknown, seemed now to supplant the spectre of boyhood. Rhetorically, Lloyd

inveighed against him as the "ghost of a dead ambition."

Enoch glowered at the shuttered windows. Why did they not conceal mere emptiness? Is manhood also to be haunted? Does the laying of one ghost but resurrect another? It seemed so. And even by day this newcome ghost would walk—a privilege denied to shades in childhood. Forgetting his early nightmares, the dreamer for a moment looked back again and recalled more delicate fancies. How fair this abode had long ago seemed when bathed in sunshine! How truly an enchanted palace! Would that it might have remained so. Set in emerald foliage, simple yet majestic, melancholy yet beautiful, massive yet so graceful that seemingly its foundation might well have been the air, how eloquently it had then suggested a snowdrift transformed by Aladdin's lamp! Time was when imagination had tenanted that house and orchard with a company of elves; time was when the architecture had been ascribed to genii and bumblebees had gossiped of Sleeping Beauty in an upper room.

Sleeping Beauty?. Enoch started and gazed more intently at the house. At an old stone dock lay an aërial craft that seemed familiar. Perhaps it is not alone the shadows of childhood's ghosts that lengthen into maturity. A beneficent spirit sees to it that the rays of happier fancies spread forward too.

Sleeping Beauty? He surveyed the closed shutters of the upper story in bewilderment. The inmates of that fateful house had not yet wakened to the day. They slept, and she— He rubbed his eyes. What had been the dénouement of that old fantasy? A lover must come to break the spell. He smiled. Another dream, more vivid than any of childhood, filled his mind — a dream of the night before. Dazedly he redreamed it now in the idle summer morning. And as he did so the

perplexity of his expression deepened. Was it a dream? The question became vital. Suddenly he leaned forward over the sill and shot a glance downward at a wharf-like rock on the shore. Next, with a motion of new activity, he turned to cast an incredulous yet half-expectant look at the chair over which his clothes were hanging. He started. The clothes were undeniably damp-looking, and a little pool of water on the floor, into which telltale drops from the chair were still trickling, sparkled in the sunshine. His eyes caught the sparkle and lighted up. Quickly he turned to the window and measured at a glance the tide-mark on a strip of hard-ribbed sand. Partly satisfied with this survey, he threw on a bath-gown and hastened out for a closer inspection.

Twice he walked up and down the strip, his eyes intent on the shelving sand.

Suddenly he stopped, stooped low, and inspected something.

As he straightened up after this scrutiny a veil of bewilderment seemed to be snatched from his eyes, leaving them clear, alight, and awake to morning. Throwing his head back, he looked vauntingly up and around, as though to dare the sky, then gazed once more at the old, white house — House of a Dream Come True!

But the gaze was not protracted. Your Arcadian lover is a healthy youth. Half god, half cub, his hour of dawn means immortality—and breakfast.

Returning to the grove, Enoch filled his arms with firewood, whistling random airs as he gathered it; whistling as he brought it to the cabin; whistling as it sprang into a blaze. And presently the coffee-pot was singing a refrain; presently a breeze woke up across the water, and, frolicking hither, fribbled with the leaves. From out in the sunshine came the hum of bees, the

caw of an outlaw crow, the *clung* of a loafing bull-frog. Busybodies of the woods seemed to be chattering outrageously with gossips of the air.

All because a footprint—a small and feminine footprint—lay impressed on the golden sand!

VII

The Battle of the Motes

AT a corner of the house with the Doric columns there rose from ground to roof an old wistaria vine which, in its upward climb of years, had, among other demolishments, loosened clapboards, twisted a lightning-rod, torn off a shutter-hinge, and finally played havoc with the coping. Spreading out over either wall, it was now, however, so far tamed that whereas on one side it still clung tenaciously to the darkness of the eaves, on the other it basked in the sunshine and framed a window.

The shutters of that window, having in the long period of inoccupancy lost several slats to the vandal, were still in a state of disrepair; and though, thanks to a liberal use of pruning-shears, their swing had been restored, they afforded but little protection against the sunlight. Behind them a bedroom, very hospitable to the dawn, offered poor retreat for a lie-abed.

This morning the usual fray was afoot between the powers of light and darkness. First, a single sun-ray stole, scoutlike, along the wall, and there hovered for a moment over a bed in one corner, as though to survey that coveted dominion. Then creeping stealthily down, it marshalled an army from the window. Through every slatless aperture they came and skirmished about the pillow. In the middle of that fair battle-field was the citadel of sleep.

(*Who stands by the Lake o' Dreams?* . . . He speaks: "*The book is mine.*" . . .)

The attack of the sun begins. Arrows of gold fly fast. The shadows hold their ground. There is a mêlée on the pillow. But suddenly the king of the rays, mounting his heights above, discharges an avalanche of sunshine. Down it rushes through the window, slantwise, invincible, straight against the portals of the town.

(She answers: "*The book is yours and mine.*" . . . He fades. . . . She tries in vain to call aloud. . . . John a' Dreams is going. . . .)

The battle turns. The citadel surrenders. The portcullises are raised. In go the shining armies.

(Oh, for another moment to recall him . . . one second more in which to catch the dream and hold it! . . . She strives to close the gates again, shrinking from the sunlight.)

To the victors belong the spoils of sleep, the loot of dreams. They pillage.

(Well and good . . . it was nothing . . . only a dream . . . away with it all to the shadows . . . and yet . . . his eyes!)

Marion started to rise with a motion of quick, wide-awake activity, but paused on the bed's edge as though some outer strand in the web of sleep could not thus by mere intention be lightly broken.

With one foot touching the rug at her bedside, she sat there looking bewilderedly at the floor. From the spotless, new-laid matting at her feet rose the indefinable fragrance of dried grasses, in which, as it were, the scent of the sunlight was retained.

Marion swept back strands of tawny hair from her forehead, as though here were the silken webbing of the spell.

But the return to the "valley titanic" is fascinating emprise. One goes now as a stranger, no longer at home in its shadows, but impatient to discover its borders, to pitch one's tent on its wild frontier.

Marion found herself striving to define that boundary-line.

Where had reality ended and the dream begun?

At first there was seemingly no division at all; episodes blended; she had been dreaming of a dream. But gradually her mind, by nature as clear and direct as the large, gray eyes expressing it, sequenced thought. She meditated back to the actual yesterday, recalling incidents unquestionably real.

Apparently the cause of all the complexity was a book — one of her father's unsuccessful publications. This book had come like a person into her life. Almost word for word she could remember certain passages, and how the author had seemed to be writing to her personally, opening up new vistas of thought, promising the exploration of an unknown world, and then, without warning, deserting her on the verge of that unimagined future. At the first reading the book had controlled her so completely that she had sat for hours together awaiting the fulfilment of the end. She had felt the influence of a nature strangely magnetic to her own. The passage that appealed to her most was this: "*Love is the capitulation of heaven.*" She could not help frowning, though, whenever she read that sentence. Did he know? Had he learned? At the first reading she had impatiently hurried through to the end. But, with that vague conclusion, what was there save to read again? Evidently her desire to do so had engendered all the perplexities of the nearest past. Frowning, she told herself the affair was hopelessly bewildering. Now that she saw what was coming in retrospection, she proceeded to blind her mind's eye. She continued to pretend she was still in the dark as to the dénouement of last evening. Perhaps she was over-timid at thought of facing so great a climax.

Of course the beginning was plain. This she was bold

enough to admit. Yesterday, late in the afternoon, she had been idling over those fateful pages on the shore near Mount Hope Point. The influence of the book had then become so strong that later—here she paused, flushing—later she had written to its author as to a needed friend. Was there any question of this? "Yes," said Timidity; "there might be." "Except for the fact," added a throbbing consciousness, "that the proof—"

Marion doubtfully eyed the pillow, then, plucking up courage, slipped a hand thereunder and slowly drew out the telltale missive. Her blushes deepened. There was nothing now but to go straight to the end. She had lost the book. Last evening while her father had been dozing in the library she had missed it—missed it, wondered—and what then? Well, she could not deny it. She had gone in search. This was natural. She confessed it implied nothing obscurely dreamlike. Often she sailed in the little *Ariel* at night when the moon was up and the water calm. Oh no; *this* was not extraordinary, but the result of that quest looked very incredible. She had set out to find the book, and with it she had found— She breathed faster. It almost seemed as though her letter, sent to nowhere, had been answered as if received!

For a moment, being now on the threshold of the discovery, she again invested the affair with a slight haze. It was far too startling an event to be defined immediately.

Who had come out of the night to greet her? Could it have actually been Enoch Lloyd? Her lips parted; her lashes drooped. Half afraid, she still disputed his reality. Perhaps, after all, it had never occurred—that meeting on the moonlit shore? Yes, the thing was a dream. Her longing to meet and know him had conjured up his form in sleep.

Thus idling on the edge of her bed in the early morn-

ing, Marion fell to hoodwinking herself (a rare delight), until at last the deception prevailed, and with some alarm she began to believe it. Oh, what if he was still at the other end of the world? Well, doubtless it was safer to think so. Then she would not be disappointed when the days passed and she never again met him. Yes, he was only a man of moon-stuff, . . . nothing more. And yet, . . . his eyes!

Marion stood up, went to the window, threw wide the blinds. A flood of sunshine filled the room. No longer an intruder, but now a welcome guest, it seemed almost as much at home here as in the fields—nearly as native to the white wainscoting and immaculate white furniture as to the pots of wild flowers that lined the sill. Indeed, few blooms could have caught the light more brightly than the printed wreaths and nosegays of the dimity hangings — quaint, beribboned blossoms, suggestive of old-world carnivals and a battle of flowers in which most of the pelted missiles had been lodged in the curtains' folds.

The bedroom, thus inviting the day, had a quaint, old-fashioned look, at pleasing variance with its present atmosphere of femininity and youth. The combination seemed unusually complete—complete, that is, except for a single lack, and this by the average occupant of a bedroom would have been deeply felt. There was not a looking-glass worthy of the name! Over the white dressing-table hung, it is true, an excellent specimen of antique mirrory; but this, though beautiful to look *at*, was almost worthless to look *in*. After the way of its kind, it shrouded things with mist. Every morning and evening it veiled a face that deserved far better treatment, and, ruder yet, obscured the lights of a pair of eyes from their owner's casual inspection. But, so far, the old-fashioned mirror was mirror enough for Marion. Evidently in her opinion the casement of the window

framed a picture more worthy of attention — Mount Hope, its rocks and picket-like cedars; the distant cottage, claimed by nature; a passing sail; a passing bird; a patch of blossoms. All these bits of the great out-doors, seeming as though sketched on the diamond-panes, were apparently deemed of far more interest than the face that like a dream-face occasionally haunted the hazy looking-glass.

To these impressions Marion yielded now

Hotter and wider the sunshine blazed into t..e room. For a moment she stood in the heart of it, half surrendering to the day; stood motionless, breathing slowly—a figure slender and pure white, save where her skin, through the sheer lawn of her night-robe, rivalled the blush of blossoms, and her hair, catching the radiance, glowed warm. Crowned by that aureole, and sovereignly erect, she faced Nature. While she stood there the letter of yesterday fluttered to her feet. Her fingers, missing it, intertwined themselves behind her. Meanwhile her breast, slight yet well defined, and softening the lines of its covering's whiteness, rose and fell so gently as to suggest a rhythm in concinnity with the tide. Her lips, now slightly parted under the lingering sentiency of her mood, wore the look of wild-rose petals just unfolding to the sun.

In through the window came a flux of summer air, palpitant and heavy with fragrance—a vast, deep-given exhalation from the lungs of Earth, as though the mother herself had come so close to Marion that even their life-breaths were exchanged.

The girl turned slowly, and, catching up the sun-shot hair from about her shoulders (a motion that seemingly might have burned her fingers), seated herself at the cloudy glass. Then, as her glance unconcernedly wandered downward from the dim reflection, she suddenly started, let fall the silken burden, and uttered a little cry.

Slowly, like a mist dissolving, the self-imposed bewilderment left her eyes. To hoodwink herself was no longer possible. The episode was real.

On the dressing-table lay a book — a book with its title hidden by the lower edge of the looking-glass, but its author's name, now so familiar to her, speakingly revealed.

The name was Enoch Lloyd.

VIII

The Mask of Blossoms

"SUNSHINE or shadow, which shall it be?" The question came in a low, tremulous voice, and there was no response. "Dear me, I've almost forgotten the whims of all you children. Let's see." Mr. Stephen Lee, with a frown, pondered deeply. Beads of perspiration stood out on his brow, whether from exertion or the present quandary it is hard to say.

Though quaintly buoyant and somewhat juvenile in activity, Mr. Lee was not one of those who, with that ungraceful tenacity often marking the verge of age, cling to a prime long past; the prime clung to him naturally. Significant signs in his dress and manner showed that, at least in outward respects, he would never pass it. For example, he held occasionally to his kindly eyes a pair of gold-rimmed glasses, which, instead of the modern spring, had a wabbly hinge at the nose that rendered them, like their wearer, exceedingly impractical. He wore, too, one of those elliptical rings about his cravat in place of the later scarf-pin. At first these may seem mere sartorial trivialities, but upon acquaintance with the little old gentleman they became symbols of himself—the eye-glasses, of his sublime disregard for utilitarian principles; the scarf-pin, of his stand-still at a middle age somewhere back in the sixties. And his round face, pink as a baby's, had likewise, as he apologetically expressed it, "failed to acquire many new wrinkles." It possessed that bright and beaming child-

ishness through which age passes on its way to the second infancy. His voice contained the only hint of descent from the summit of a cheerful life. Not that there was any rasp or crack in it, but only a slight falter, an uncertainty, as now, for instance, when he commanded affectionately, "Children, you must go to bed."

The words, unanswered as before, seem commonplace. Not so when the sound of his voice is supplemented by a glance at his position.

There was not a child in sight. Mr. Lee stood ankle-deep in the fresh-turned earth of his garden, addressing with grandfatherly air a pot of flowers.

"Yes, yes," he said, at length; "you asters like warmth. I'll put you near the petunias," with which decision Mr. Lee knelt down and proceeded with scrupulous care to lay his charge in the lap of Mother Earth; then many others in the same row, after frequent trips to the greenhouse, till a single file of diminutive green things had changed their quarters. "Now go to sleep, all of you," commanded their guardian; whereat he fell first to the critical contemplation of a stunted horse-chestnut-tree across the garden, then to inspecting a handful of seeds with scrutiny as minute as that of a lapidary studying his latest purchase.

Now and again, while he pottered about among "the children," as he always called the old-time flowers of his garden, his only actual child glanced up from a book and watched him with motherly eyes.

For the bestowal of these frequent glances she occupied an excellent vantage-point. From the house a lane wandered to the water, passing on its way an apple orchard run to wood, the contortions of whose trunks and branches suggested some orgy of nature and a profligate old age. One of the trees, in particular, reeling up the slope between house and orchard, bore in every limb and gesture signs of a reckless life. Bold as a tipsy major, he

stood—or, better, staggered—before the ranks of his fellow-roisterers, as though to lead that carousing crew against the house. (Leave decorum to the pines, the dour cedars!) With arms abroad and trunk lurching, he was, indeed, as Mr. Lee put it, "a case." Homeric, ribald, fat-girthed, buccaneer-like in yaw and careen, here, while three generations of men had measured their lengths in the grave, this vagabond of the orchard had thrived on riotous living—a Falstaff among trees.

Often and often Marion, idling in the orchard, would survey him with a quaint remonstrance. Her father's verdict had caught her mind, and she rebelled against it. Feminine, she found none of these grotesqueries in nature, no burlesques of humanity, no kinship in prodigality. She could appreciate the sadness everywhere, and the joy—the gentler side. Nor was the might lost on her—the force, the sublimity, the Inevitable Tragic. All this both exalted and oppressed her mind. But the *travesty* of nature was for other eyes. She failed to feel the grimness of Earth's humor; all was fair. How deeply, how openly, she loved it—every detail and the whole! To her the orchard was no camp of revellers, but rather a company of war-worn veterans battered by the northeast wind. She called it "Their Last Stand." And as for their rugged old leader, how Herculean his struggle up the hill!

Truly, nature is anything to any one — thousand-faced, all-various. Up amid the branches of the old apple-tree Marion was reading. Screened by the foliage, she lay along a rambling bough, her white dress merely flecking the interstices, as if here and there the dots of its whiteness amid the green were merely a separate cluster of the blossoms. She felt a quiet satisfaction this afternoon in the belief that she and her father were to spend the evening together without visitors. As Mr. Lee, in whom nothing save absent-mindedness exceeded

hospitality, had entirely forgotten his note to a certain person, she, of course, knew nothing of that person's invitation to dinner. Her every thought, though, had a trick to-day of playing the truant and running off to keep an imaginary tryst with the stranger. There was something rather disquieting in this breach of discipline, an element at times almost alarming, with what seemed like threats of a general revolution.

Marion vaguely rebelled. All day, in a perfunctory sort of way, she had been endeavoring to keep the peace. But now, late in the afternoon, under the spell of the reaching shadows and western haze, the effort demanded unusual decision. She closed her book. This, at least, was a decisive act—something definite. Pressing its covers close, she felt as if an influence were being imprisoned between them and there lay helpless, merely at the will of her hands.

But suddenly she listened, startled. Below, in the dog-grass at the edge of the orchard, something stirred. It sounded like a footstep. She shot a look at the garden. Her father was still there. Why should she hesitate before glancing in the other direction? She smiled at the absurdity of it; then, from a small opening in the foliage, straightway gazed boldly at the orchard. Slowly from the soft shadows of her neck a flush stole upward, wide over her cheeks and temples. She must have breathed rather fast and hard in that moment, for a flake of the apple-blossoms close to her parted lips fell away and floated, gossamer white, downward. It was as if some virgin whisper had fallen to earth—a petal.

On the foremost margin of the orchard, bold against its vague arabesques of shadow, stood an erect figure, full in the sun. Instantly she recognized it and drew back. A pair of eyes, never forgettable, were besieging her vantage-point. She feared to move, breathless with uncertainty. Whether or not he had yet discovered

her she could not discern. Probably yes. His glance at the tree seemed personal. It was — for a different reason.

On him that rakish old apple-tree always had exercised a peculiar fascination. His eyes were now alight while for the hundredth time he surveyed it. The look of perennial revelry was his as well. Seeming to understand something, he smiled. Truth is, the tree to him was neither "case" nor tipsy major, nor by any means Herculean in suggestion. With arms gesticulating a satyr's pantomime and head decked out in a fillet of blossoms—a fillet wantonly awry—it seemed to him a divine old rascal—none other, in fact, than the great god Pan. Now for the hundredth time his eyes lit up, sparkled, and danced, as though dim memories recalled some other shore, some pagan shore—Ionian, mythic, shepherded and sung; a shore whose reeds were plucked and played on; a shore against whose emerald slope this piper had often flashed—white, shaggy, wild, hilarious—turning the very sunshine into music.

Was he not of those days? Did he not remember? Could he not still hear the stir of agile haunches as they rose, the flourish of pipes it was ecstasy to dance to? Would the world ever return to that golden age?

Truly, nature is anything to any one — thousand-faced, all-various.

Enoch walked slowly towards the house, while Marion, breathing freer, watched him.

Mr. Lee at the moment, being apparently more than ever irritated by the sight of that stunted horse-chestnut-tree across the garden, seemed to look past his approaching guest without a sign of notice. "What in the world are you here for?" he mumbled, apostrophizing the miserable specimen of treehood. "I'll have you turned out in short order."

Lloyd stared at the annoyed little person before him,

too amazed at first even to resent the reception. This irascible individual appeared to be a sober person, evidently not the gardener in his cups.

"Miserable tramp!" he continued, "you ruin the landscape;" and, turning his back on the malformed sapling, Mr. Lee began deeply to contemplate a bulb that lay on the ground awaiting his attention.

For a minute Lloyd stood speechless, gazing at him. To be called a tramp and ruiner of landscapes, to be invited to dine, then greeted thus by some one who was apparently a friend of the host, was not conducive to cordiality. But Lloyd controlled his quick temper. "Is Mr. Lee in the house?"

The publisher turned and looked up in bewilderment. The question, so suddenly put, seemed to benumb his mind, which, as is the custom of certain tranquil mentalities in the moment of a surprise, absented itself straightway, and Mr. Lee fumbled with his impractical glasses, smiling blandly.

"Is he?" repeated Lloyd.

This partial reiteration of the query only seemed to deprive it of all meaning. Yet some sort of an answer seemed imperative. "Can't you see that I am not?" was the soothing but ambiguous response.

"You! It is impossible! Mr. Lee would never be guilty of such an outrage!"

The publisher dropped his precious bulb. "Good Heavens! What's an outrage?"

"You have insulted me."

Mr. Lee's mouth opened with increased mystification.

"Insulted you!" Slowly a smile came into the humorous little eyes. "Oh, I see—I see! Forgive me. I must have been talking to the children."

"The children!" Enoch glanced about searchingly, then surveyed the other with a new pity and comprehension. "Where is Mr. Lee?" he repeated, indulgently.

The publisher smiled and stared at his unknown visitor with an air of compassion. "Who, may I ask, are you?"

"My name is Lloyd. Please inform Mr. Lee that Mr. Enoch Lloyd has come."

The publisher started, laughed heartily, and held out his hand. "You — Lloyd! Good gracious! How are you? Glad to see you. Forgive me. I understand. That tree, you know — miserable tramp of a tree! — I must have been talking to it. Trees and flowers are my children, you see. Dear me, why didn't you tell me? How in the world could I know it was you? So very young! And I hadn't expected you."

"Hadn't expected me?"

"No. What's surprising in that? But, look here; stay to dinner, won't you? It will be ready soon."

Lloyd's eyes sparkled with amusement. His sense of the ludicrous was almost extreme. "That's what I came for."

"Did you?" Mr. Lee's look, for all its hospitality, expressed a certain dubiousness concerning the informality of such a proceeding.

"Yes." This with evident appreciation of his host's discomfiture. "I dine wherever the mood takes me."

"Ah, indeed! You authors are such Bohemians. Yet suppose—"

Lloyd waved off the implied objection. "I go to any house I please," he observed, with mischievous impudence.

At this a low ejaculation escaped the publisher's lips. "Intolerable!"

"When I'm asked," added Lloyd, laughing, and held out the forgotten invitation.

Once more the unmanageable eye-glasses went up, and once again to the eyes behind him that contagious merriment of expression. Then, however, there came a

droop to the corners of the mouth and the voice's tremor grew more apparent even in laughter. "I must be getting old," allowed Mr. Lee; "and I never expected to!" Whereat, to preclude the possibility of response, he continued, cheerfully, "I'll just plant this bulb and water the flowers. Would you mind looking for Marion, my daughter? Introduce yourself and tell her you're coming to dinner."

Lloyd's eyes lighted up with impatient fervor. "Where can I find Miss Lee?"

The publisher astonished his visitor by glancing around with upraised eyes, as though vaguely searching the air. "Oh, up in a tree somewhere."

"In a tree!"

"Yes, she's on terms of intimacy with the birds."

The last words were lost on Enoch. Already he was walking about with eyes aloft on the multitude of branches.

He felt as if his one aim now was to find his visitor of the night before. The chances all seemed in favor of this; the publisher's daughter must surely be his muse incarnate. The yawl *Ariel* had told a story. Yet he could not be positively certain until he had seen and talked with her. It did not seem possible that the feminine spirit of the boat and shore—"the savior of his hope," as he extravagantly called her—could ever again, after that fleeting moment of their meeting, appear to him tangible and human like himself. Moreover, he felt somewhat doubtful as to whether he would recognize her under different conditions. The shadows had been so deep, the light of her eyes so transient, the whole episode so visionary and unreal.

For a moment he glanced at the cove and at a skiff in which he had crossed it, almost wishing he had not come. Then suddenly he braved the case, and, as if impelled by instinct, drew nearer and nearer in his lofty

search to the tree called Pan. Below it, finally, he paused and gazed upward.

Marion hid her face behind the leaves. She was rebelling against his search. Should they meet now he would recognize her dress and see the book in her hand. She would appear to him under the same conditions as before. Intuitively she felt that recognition would at once give him an intimate grasp of her nature, and his would claim close kinship with her own. She dreaded his consciousness of their natural bond; and though she feared the *Ariel's* betrayal, she determined, if possible, to conceal her identity.

It was her pride that held her deep in a recess of the tree, glad of its leafy screen; it was her pride that rejoiced in the deepening dusk and prompted an evasion; it was her pride that usurped the power of fate and presided over their future.

The fates are not a triumvirate, but rather a polyarchy of supreme trifles.

Marion's face was hidden by a spray of apple-blossoms.

IX

The Gentle Philosopher

"IS this Miss Lee?" He stood in the dog-grass, hat in hand, looking straight up into the leafy heights, intent on fathoming their secret.

No reply.

His next words bespoke a certain obstinacy of persistence, a dangerous calm. "Forgive me; I can plainly see that somebody is there."

Not a word.

He assumed a formal tone. "Miss Lee, your father has asked me to introduce myself. I am Mr. Lloyd—Enoch Lloyd—and I've come to dine with you."

Still no response from above, but now the foliage stirred restlessly and a flurry of blossoms snowed about him, several of which settled on his head and shoulders, while one he caught in air—a petal so light that almost it might have melted in his palm. The touch of it seemed to quicken impulse. Impetuously he stepped to the trunk, bold for ascent.

At this the leaves overhead rustled in great commotion, and a voice, suddenly finding itself, cried, breathlessly, "No—don't!"

He hesitated; then, with an air of inexorable resolve, reached for a low branch.

"Don't!" The remonstrance was scarcely audible now—almost a whisper; part of the rustle of the leaves.

He paused again, and, dividing the foliage with one hand, scanned the upper interstices. But nothing defi-

nite was yet revealed; nothing, that is, save— He strained his eyes. What was it? A book? Yes, undoubtedly a book, clasped closely in two hands which, either by chance or purpose, concealed the title.

He smiled. "Queer fruit this tree bears! What, may I ask, is the name of it?"

She made sure the title was hidden. Her composure was now regained. A tactic of defence against his siege had suddenly suggested itself. "It's the fruit of the Tree of Life," she said, "but not of the Tree of Knowledge."

His brow clouded; the answer perplexed him. "What do you mean?"

"That, like life, it is filled with mystery; that, unlike knowledge, it yields but little nourishment."

Bewildered, he discarded the subject. A much more enthralling enigma filled his mind. With fiery impulse he set foot in a knot-hole of the trunk.

"No, no!" she cried, quickly; "it's late; I'm coming down."

Then, for the first time obedient, he stepped back and stood with an upraised hand, waiting to assist her.

"You'll find a chair on the veranda," she told him. "It will do for a step-ladder."

Eagerly impatient, he hastened to the house. In a moment—a fateful moment—the chair was under a low branch and he beside it, looking up.

But now the leaves and blossoms, swaying over their little depths of shadow, seemed to whisper of a loss. The foliage no longer shrined an oracle. Marion had gone!

Enoch looked about him blankly. The ruse nettled him, and to be nettled was to be uncomfortable. With a shrug of the shoulders—an unaccustomed gesture—he joined Mr. Lee in the garden.

At last the beloved bulb had found a resting-place, and the publisher appeared well satisfied with his work.

Together they walked towards the house.

Lloyd surveyed the Doric columns and wistaria-vine. There was something tranquillizing in the stately and cold façade so impressively dominant above the shore; something that exerted a sort of stoical influence, due, no doubt, to its Grecian lines; something of masterful serenity in its aloofness from the flotsam and jetsam of the tide.

Enoch assumed an air of leisurely calm. "How old is the house?" he asked. "In model it harks back some two thousand years."

Mr. Lee nodded. "And in structure as many hundred — a venerable age for a house of wood. H-um! It's queer how foreigners scorn our relics. They should remember that everything is relative. A wooden building, as old as this, is as far advanced, in proportion to its naturally shorter lease of life, as half of their stone remains. Well, well; we none of us understand the proportion of things—the relative value." The little old gentleman halted and looked about him with a moralizing air, as one who glances not so much at his material surroundings as at the ever-manifest yet elusive atmosphere of a Personality behind them all. "I tell you, Lloyd, there's nothing like a sense of proportion, delicacy of comparison, ratiocination, true perspective." The publisher faced his protégé and rested a hand on one of the broad shoulders. "For example, as to the question of failure," he said, with cheerful kindness, "who can see the thing as it really is?" He paused, and, feeling the shoulder shrug, withdrew his hand. "Who says 'fail'?" he demanded, beamingly. "Trite as it may seem, I ask myself again and again why it is that we make mere results the touchstone for all decisions. U-um! Don't you agree?"

Lloyd started. "Er—yes, yes."

"Results!" ejaculated Mr. Lee, too absorbed in his

disquisition to notice Enoch's frequent glances at the house. "Results? Why, judging by present results alone, even the Creator could not but convict Himself of failure. What of my flowers that fade in the bud? What of all the waste and accidents of nature? Are these failures? Perhaps; but only so far as failure marks the universal ongo towards success. U-um! Don't you agree?"

Lloyd was gazing abstractedly at the house. Already this detention seemed unbearable. His momentary sang-froid forsook him utterly. The homily of his beneficent patron became in his ears an incoherent mumble, almost a bore. Such is youth; such is love; such is the universal ongo!

"Don't you agree?" Mr. Lee, raising his impractical glasses, held them wabbling on his nose.

Enoch all at once grew deeply interested. "Yes—yes, of course."

Mr. Lee's voice fell to a tone of low earnestness. Clinching one hand, he pressed it against the palm of the other in a gesture of emphasis impossible to ignore. "I tell you, Lloyd, a man in the minority of the affirmative never fails. Only the negatives of life are failures. Like zeros, they have their use temporarily; they swell the numbers of mankind. But is it not probable that when at last the problem comes to a solution every zero will be cancelled and only the digits—the positive quantities, the essential entities of life—remain?"

Enoch's eyes fell. "It is very probable," he said. Then with the quick animation of instinctive controversy, " And what do you think will be the sum of all those numbers?"

Mr. Lee straightened his glasses. "U-um! What?"

Lloyd smiled. "It seems to me that the sum will be One—just One. We are all fractions. Even the most positive human quantity is an infinitesimal fraction.

There may be a million million of fractions whose sum is one—just one."

"Pantheism," mused Mr. Lee, in mild dismay—"evident pantheism! Do you really—"

But Lloyd was looking again at the Doric columns, tuning his mind as best he could to their lofty calm.

They walked on.

"And yet," observed the little old gentleman, "you showed nothing of this in *The Greatest Good*."

"No. I think I have somewhat changed recently in my belief." His glance swerved from the columns to a bright spot on the front door. It was the knocker, a small eagle done in brass. "And yet—" He glanced at an upper window, framed by a wistaria-vine. Then he was silent.

The publisher smiled to himself with partial comprehension. This beginner at life interested him deeply. He remembered another primary scholar confronting the same dilemmas. Well, the new generation must, of course, assert itself. Here was a youngster apparently high enough above the average to become a leader in the natural progression. Stephen Lee put it simply. His was no subtle philosophy, but a broad-minded benevolence towards younger life. Mellowly he recognized the advantages of youth. In Lloyd he could feel the glow of an exceptional personality. Mr. Lee had been intimate with genius. Thought he to himself—being partial to analogy—"This is the way of it: The physical embryo in a few short months profits by the evolution of the ages, redefining in each successive phase a procreal advance in the race's making, until at the end the individual is born. So far, so good. Now, are there not at infinitely rarer intervals indications of a psychal embryology in which some master mind runs all the gamut of human opinion, redefining in each illusive phase a past advance in the spirit's making, until at the

end—then, and then only; then, and as if spontaneously —the fire of genius blazes our pathway into the beyond?"

He recalled this interesting hypothesis at present. But young men, of course, must not be flattered; they must be warned. "My belief," he allowed, "may be trite, though vital. Do you object to a truism or two? No? Well, perhaps it's not a platitude to one so young. Listen, Lloyd. The progress of the right must be assured. The right is life. The advance of life must be individually maintained. By life I mean all that is creative in existence, all that furthers the true development. This is the universal struggle. As in the material world forces upbuild and forces destroy, so in the psychical realm powers work life and death. Lloyd, it's this life that rears America. It's this life that still predominates. Keep it predominant in you—the spirit of Western civilization. Beware of atrophy, the effete, the decadent. If by any chance it ever threatens you, fight it like a disease. Look out for the tearing-down process. In the end, of course, it will kill your body; the tissues must go. But the spirit of a man need not—the spirit cannot be murdered. Death comes to it only by neglect—a neglect that amounts to suicide. At least," added Mr. Lee, "this is my way of thinking."

For all his little homilies, Stephen Lee was perhaps as unopinionated and tolerant an old gentleman as ever lived. Thanks to his generous humor, and possibly to a large share of that lovable carelessness so often consonant with generosity, he could never condemn. Life to him, except for the old, ever-whispering sorrow, had been, as he said, "a pleasant affair." Besides, he was a man of bulbs and shoots and seedlings—things troublesome, it is true, yet worth the trouble and conducive to genial tranquillity.

Enoch inclined his head in mute agreement.

"My dear Lloyd," concluded the publisher, in his old-

fashioned way, as they reached the house, "a word, if you'll forgive me, before I forget. (These things mean so much to me.) As yet, your talent is as fair and white as the heart of a young girl. It is, so to speak, your bride. I hope you will protect it accordingly." Stepping up to the veranda, he paused, turned, and looked off at the water. "I've seen so many," he said, as if to himself, a little sadly, "succumb to their first failure."

His brow cleared suddenly and he glanced up sideways at Enoch, who was now on the veranda beside him leaning indolently against a column. "But why should I speak so to you? I'm getting to be an old misanthrope. Come; you must see the house. Do you know there's a British bullet in the library?"

"A British—"

"Yes; Revolutionary, of course. It came through the window one night when my grandfather was reading aloud from the Bible. This is a family story, furbished up, no doubt, but true in the main. 'Live in peace,' read my grandfather, imposingly, when suddenly in whizzed the shot and embedded itself in the Bible. They say my illustrious grandfather read only from the Old Testament thereafter, preferring its latitude in the way of vengeance till under his leadership the cause of such informalities had been removed."

"In those days," laughed Enoch, "they took the bull by the horns." He glanced back at the bay as Mr. Lee pushed open the door.

On Mount Hope one of his cottage windows flamed like a huge burning-glass in the light of the setting sun. A cloud, cumulous and flesh-colored, hung heavy above the trees. Lloyd's glance returned to the near shore. Already it was fringed with shadows. Whitely distinct against them his primitive skiff lazed at her painter's length from the low-lying dock of stone. Whitely dis-

tinct another craft, yawl-rigged and birdlike, lay gunwale to gunwale with his own.

The door was now open. Mr. Lee, with polite formality, stood waiting for his guest to enter first.

Lloyd hesitated, foot on threshold. "Do you sail much?"

"Now and then, when Marion persuades me."

"Your daughter enjoys sailing?"

"She loves it."

Enoch stepped impatiently into the hall. "And—does she sail the boat herself—*alone?*"

Mr. Lee followed him. "Why, what—" There had been something so impetuous in the question. "Yes, often alone—even at night."

X

Taking the Bull by the Horns

ENOCH waited in the library, striving to muster patience by the inspection of this and that.

The room suggested evening. Melancholy, yet reposeful, it told of a sterner age. Anything garish here would have seemed a sacrilege. The roof of the veranda shielded the library from sunshine. In some rooms, as in Marion's, the spirit of the sun appears to linger after nightfall; evening is but an interlude between lasting summer days. In others, as in this, the night has once and for always come to its own; the low light of a lamp is separate and little suffusive; effulgent merely in a patch. As with a lantern in a wood, all beyond its scope is dark. Who can express the tranquillity of these retreats? It is definable only by silences. Here the darkness is a gracious presence. If different lights have different influences—the sunshine one, the candle another; lamps, electricity, gas, flashes in the sky, all various effects, making moods—are there not also as many darknesses? The question suggests a fascinating study in psychology. How opposed the dark of a tomb and of open night-time, of a lonely bedroom and a book-filled library! And yet the matter of light and shadow is, of course, primarily determined in ourselves; it is causative more often than resultant. Even the darkness of a tomb may be invested with gracious attributes.

. . . . . "her beauty makes
This vault a feasting presence full of light."

That which is loneliness to one may be solitude to another. Day and night speak any language.

Enoch lent himself to the room; listened a moment to its story.

Under his gaze, on a corner table, a family Bible—massive monument of old beliefs!—lay open at the page where the bullet had struck it, the scorched little hole still visible, and, deep embedded, the lead itself.

Lloyd looked up and around at the walls, from which the low ceiling sagged to a central beam. At one side of the room long lines of shelves—sagging, too—supported a heavy burden of books, brownish for the most part and in ponderous sets.

Enoch crossed the room and glanced at the titles. With few exceptions they meant nothing to him. What were all these histories, biographies, theological works, encyclopædias, cumbrous, unheard-of annuals? They seemed but the epitaphs of dead philosophies. They meant no more than the numberless grave-stones in some old church-yard through which a stranger passes—no more and yet no less; nothing real, and yet what a powerful impression of solemnity, of sacred melancholy, in all this obsolescence; what majestic sadness in this old cemetery of thought and faith! Even now the books were breathing a message. Dim in their mere presence lay written a poem in sombre elegiacs, profounder perhaps than aught their pages might contain. Faith is the poetry of religion. Ancient faiths, no matter how long relinquished, still ring on in beautiful elegy, each a stanza in the yet unfinished poem, each still vaguely rhythmic with ourselves.

Lloyd turned from the shelves slowly and glanced at one end of the room, where a low fireplace of brick, surmounted by a shelf and looking-glass, stretched wide above a hearth-stone, cracked and sunken. Under the mantel-shelf hung a rusty sword; over the mirror an oil-

painting that portrayed in three-quarters length the weapon's wearer. He was a short, granite-visaged man, in the uniform of a Continental officer. His face bespoke the vigor of a pioneer. The eyes themselves suggested weapons—weapons of defence, never aggressive yet never yielding. Enoch noticed that their gaze followed him; he felt their scrutiny as though it blocked his own. There must have been a vast amount of reserve, of proud and virile seclusion, in this patriarch of the Lee family. Surely before nothing less than this in the men of his time would the aboriginal Americans, and later the English, have receded. By nothing less than this in his descendants could circumstance—

Lloyd again turned, this time abruptly, and glanced up at the opposite wall. There, above a cabinet of bric-à-brac, blue bowls, teacups, a tureen, and various other specimens of the Chinese art, long ago brought overseas to the port of Bristol, hung another portrait. From this looked down a little old gentleman, much milder and gentler looking than his progenitor of the harder days. Where the soldier's hand, in one corner of the first picture, rested on a sword-hilt, the hand of this quaint person, in the same relative position, clasped a small, dilapidated volume, leather-bound. In the hand of one a sword, in the other's grasp a book! War, as usual, had been the precursor of literature; action the ancestor of meditation. And yet, had not something been lost in the succession—something of stamina, invincibility, and force? The thought and philosophy that had gone hand in hand with action, as suggested by the weighty books, were now bearing fruit in the pursuit of gentler letters. Had Stephen Lee carried the ancestral energy into these pleasant fields? Lloyd rediscovered a truism. Is it not so, he meditated, that peace and plenty work deterioration on any race and any man? No matter what the activity in the arts and

industries, is it not essential that again and again barbarity must return to reinvigorate a people or a person, to bring them or him back for a draught at the springs of life and reassert the savage? Lloyd at the present moment considered his own generation futile in comparison with its predecessors. Moodily he measured the age by his momentary undervaluation of a single individual, and that individual himself. Childlike, he allowed his moods to qualify his view of the entire scheme. Fate, after all, is a kindly old nurse that we scrimmage with in our passions. Lloyd's was the self-exaggeration of the undisciplined, the perfectly natural egoism of a child. But now the first evidence of genuine self-consciousness, superseding the long subliminal contemplation, showed in his looks. Something seemed about to fade from his eyes—a light that had hitherto bestowed the glamour of dreams on all things.

Once more he glanced up at the old soldier enviously. If circumstance nowadays would only take the form of a swift and comprehensive bullet! If it could only be met by the simple heroism of a call to arms! And yet how big the present seemed! Despite the bias of individual failure, and for all his extravagance in staking so much on the moment's hope, Lloyd felt the times pulsate within him. In some small measure he conceived the nation's scope. Had it not already broadened the human view; is it not in the end to liberate mankind? Is it not to recast humanity in the old heroic mould, or, better still, to breed a race of infinitely more than Olympian proportions? Towards this each nation had done its share. Was it not perhaps for America—all America, north, south, east, west, ultimately corporate from Greenland to Cape Horn—to complete that evolution? "The shapes arise"—shapes of the empire of man; far, dim shapes of the millennium. The gods are beaten at their own game — Jupiter by the harnessers of light-

ning, Vulcan by thousands at the forges; the "stag-eyed queen" and all that old gynæocracy by our own, which is far more potent; and, last but greatest, Stentor himself by the modern voice, the everywhere-audible voice, the voice of the people! Some one shall express this; some one shall sing this! Was it mad of Lloyd to predict that in the very end, when all is said and all is done, and all that has been said and done is comprehended, America may breed a Homer? Can the Revolution ever become a myth, the Rebellion an epic of the ancients? It must all be looked back to — looked back to for perhaps a thousand years, or ten or fifty thousand—conceived and born spontaneously in a nature. That nature will *be* America, as Homer was heroic Greece. But can it be possible that its epic shall sing the tragedy of an Iliad?

Lloyd started. Suddenly these wild prophecies were broken by the sound of a footstep, or, rather, the subtle influence of a presence in the room.

Instinctively he glanced down from the martial portrait to the long and narrow mirror which, from its position on the mantel-shelf, revealed the room. Searching the looking-glass, he stood spellbound, fearing to move or breathe. Dimly reflected he saw the figure of a young girl, who, having entered the library at the far end behind him, apparently followed his abstracted gaze upward and was now herself lost for a moment in the contemplation of the portrait's face. Evidently she forgot the mirror, and, since his back was towards her, thought herself unseen. She stood there unconsciously, almost beyond the range of the lamp-light, her dark dress vague in the shadows, her face indefinitely revealed. Above the brow her hair, like a second lamp in the large interior, seemed to cast a radiance downward about her features, as though luminous in itself. This effect of lucency was heightened in her upraised eyes.

Lloyd lost himself in gazing.

But presently a subtle intuition seemed to trouble her, and her glance fell to the looking-glass, her eyes met his own.

He turned instantly, intending by a free and careless manner to carry it off with a good grace, thus to save her from confusion.

To his surprise she advanced into the circle of lamplight and held out her hand no less easily than himself.

The tactic told. In a moment he was awkward with wondering. Her manner and bearing as she greeted him bespoke a perfect candor and naturalness that deadened his hope. Her clinging black dress, cut slightly low at the neck, seemed to emphasize her simplicity. For an instant her eyes, clear gray, and therefore neutral mediums of expression, suggested as he touched her hand the eyes of her militant ancestor, strong in the defence of reserve. In the next moment, when a smile lent to them a soft, hazel light, they seemed to deny even the inner existence of the slightest apprehension. On their surface he read gracious but formal greeting; deeper — nothing! And yet in her air of dominion, in the poise of her head, the look of her large eyes, the straight sweep of her figure there was something that recalled his thoughts to that old heroic mould — something eloquent of the "stag-eyed queen." This, however, was a fleeting impression. The personal question engrossed him. Was she his visitor of the night before? He could not be sure. Her manner baffled him. It betrayed nothing whatever of recognition nor of that deep comprehension with which for a single moment she had greeted him on the shore. If these were the eyes that had answered his own, these the lips that had breathed encouragement, they were infinitely sensitive to expression. It had worked a remarkable transformation. Piqued, he began to de reciate her

charm; told himself at once that by comparison with the "savior of his hope" she was as prose to poetry, as a song written to a song sung.

All these were the muddled impressions of his first glance; then he found himself listening to her voice, to the mere sound and quality of her voice, as to a meaning utterance. The words, of course, would convey nothing.

"Please forgive me," she began, "for vanishing so; but it was late, and I felt dishevelled."

He made a deprecatory gesture, dumbly letting the low crystal tone sink into his consciousness, until suddenly his face went bright with fervor, as though he had heard a familiar melody. When she had spoken from the tree the rustle of leaves and the open air had frittered away her voice; but here the tone endured. It became interpretable. Where her manner and even her eyes had succeeded in disappointing him, this voice — this lasting voice—low, liquid, and mellow as the tone of a violin, seemed to echo her greeting of the shore.

Their talk was at sixes and sevens, she persistent in the commonplace, he interjecting minced allusions to the night before.

Meantime his imagination busied itself with resetting the scene of the first act. Fancy was a quick scene-shifter in the comedy. It conjured up the deep night-time out-of-doors; placed a moon above her; contrived a stretch of water; summoned again in thought the whole of that enchanting vision to his mind's eye. And fancy superintended the stage production. It arrayed her again in white; read into her eyes a deeper look; lent to her voice a memory of other words. Fancy was property-man as well. It laid an open book on the moonlit shore. Fancy was call-boy and prompter in the wings. It hurried the leading man out to meet the leading lady, whispered a line in his ready ear.

The spell of the echo was at its height. Carried away

by the moment, Enoch was for blurting out a point-blank question, for insanely forcing the issue with a word. But, alack for the guilelessness of youth, deep are the wilds of its lunacy, devious the stratagem with which it works; there is method in its madness. Lloyd longed to see her confused, embarrassed into surrender. Basely he schemed to provoke a blush. The shot must be quick and unexpected—Parthian.

He spoke suddenly. "The book is yours and mine."

He watched the mark. Did she start — almost imperceptibly? Did she color—ever so little? He could not be sure. The blankly questioning way in which she raised her eyebrows was a masterly defence. It suggested an impregnable nature.

The duel by this so occupied their attention that neither noticed Mr. Lee, who, having entered the room at the far end near the fireplace, was now for the thousandth time surveying his grandsire's sword with open admiration.

Meanwhile the failure of Lloyd's ruse had turned that novice bluntly resolute. He cast aside his foil for a bludgeon. This much he had already learned: the primitive way is best—with women.

He stepped closer, bent on a crude attack, and now at last her eyelids fell. "Miss Lee, I demand—"

He was interrupted by the musing voice of the publisher, who unluckily at this moment turned from his meditations on the sword.

"Yes, yes, Lloyd; they did take the bull by the horns in those days, didn't they?"

XI

By-ways of Conversation

IN the dining-room as in the library, that true colonial atmosphere, now so rapidly dying of imitation, was preserved. The wall-paper, in faded blue and white, presented a panorama of quaint design. Knights and ladies in varied scenes, frequently repeated, were enacting a scene of Arthurian romance. The furniture, china, and plate, all inherited, no doubt, from the worthy ancestor, would have merited description years ago. To-day they are reproduced by the thousand, even to worm-holes, chips, and tarnish.

The man-servant, however, who waited on the three, would not have been easily reproducible. Tall, thin, stiffly respectable, silent and funereal, he nevertheless, when called upon by his master or his young mistress, even for the slightest service, seemed not unmellow, thanks to his devotion and long fidelity. The look of Timothy was the look of an old watch-dog.

For a time the conversation ran smoothly enough, and Lloyd, as though granting an armistice, lent himself to the quiet charm of this out-of-the-world household.

Their talk was of many things. Beginning with conventionalities, they soon were far afield, much as strollers of a summer afternoon leave narrow streets for a ramble in the country. They followed, as it were, the cool and winding by-ways of conversation. It seemed a safe excursion, for if, when the colloquy lagged and they

rested, so to speak, by the road-side, Youth was all for adventuring into the woods or off to seek encounter, there sat Age to restrain the hot-head. Not that Mr. Lee was in any way conscious of the underlying spell. His verdancy in such matters, to say nothing of his frequent wool-gathering, offered Enoch an opening at every turn. But this very innocence, and the kindly way in which he took it for granted that the pair were deeply interested in horticultural argument, would have disarmed a Machiavelli.

Marion, too, appeared to have become a hopeless enthusiast in botany, so assiduously did she ply her father with questions as to the classification of species in the Latin tongue.

Nevertheless, the subject did not preclude the possibility of a battle of flowers, a short and pointed sally over the head of Mr. Lee. Thus:

Enoch. "After all, nothing is more beautiful than a water-lily."

Marion (*coloring vividly*). "Do you think so?"

Enoch. "Except, perhaps, a rose."

Marion. "Well, a rose—"

Enoch (*carelessly significant*). "For instance, a Crimson Rambler."

Marion (*with a flutter of her lashes*). "Yes, but father seems to have a preference for far less modest flowers. Now, the coxcomb—"

So it went, as it always goes when three's a crowd. Soon, however, the presence of the third became irksome to Enoch, botany a bore. But since for mere politeness' sake he must wear a pleasant face, he wore it gay. This was his habit. Before any obstacle, philosophical or circumstantial, he would soon lose patience, and mentally go dancing off to fribble and dally with life, like Donatello in the sunshine. The trick had saved him many a baffling moment. At such times he be-

came mischievously prankish, ready-tongued. Faun-like, he now, as it were, lay in hiding to surprise a nymph.

Opposite Lloyd a wide bow-window of large panes and swinging sashes faced the shore. It was open, and the muslin curtains had been drawn aside. Nevertheless he could distinguish nothing. The slope and water had no dividing line. It was lost in darkness. Therefore, through two courses of that simple yet memorable repast there came no inspiration from without to nerve the aggressor into action. But, presently, up over the distant shore-line crept a meddler. Lloyd stared. The thing was so red, so uncommonly large, and to-night the goblin face in it seemed to assume an unprecedented bulge.

Enoch smiled as if he had been winked at, something very like moonshine gleaming in his eyes. Once again he was scanning the enchanted shore. The two small boats, now visible in the moonlight, still lay touching each other, their masts pointing skyward like silver spears.

Lloyd shot a look at Marion. "Your father tells me you are your own captain—even at night."

"Yes, my own captain—always."

He caught her meaning, and saw Mr. Lee smile indulgently.

"True, very true," said that innocent father. "I play crew, or bo's'n, or something. Now, even in the matter of books—"

Enoch watched her face. For an instant he thought her eyes were striving to signal to the bo's'n at the wheel an emphatic "Hard a-lee!" There were rocks ahead, and she saw them.

Lloyd took a hand in the pilotage. "In the matter of books—?" he persisted, eagerly.

Mr. Lee, bewildered by a sort of whirlwind that seemed

to be brewing overhead, saw nothing for it but to pursue his course. The old man's eyes twinkled. "Do you know, I was for rejecting that book of yours, but Marion put her foot down."

Lloyd bowed low to his fair advocate. Then for the first time her glance fell. She was experiencing an unprecedented disquiet. Do what she would, he was wresting the secret of recognition from her grasp. How futile to have changed her dress, coiled her warm hair high, assumed a manner! But her will was dauntless, and the more circumstances seemed to thwart it the more her innate pride of spiritual seclusion rebelled against discovery.

As a last resort she became flippant and ironical. "The book is beautifully printed," she said, and her father glanced up from his Madeira. Would he ever understand the character that lay behind those changing eyes? Her mother had never been so, and as for himself—well, he was struggling bravely enough even now against the inundation of commercialism and new methods. But he was losing his grip on business and on life. No; her fibre must be woven of older stuff — on the same loom as that of his grandfather. At first her new irony seemed to him a mood the most enigmatical and least worthy of her he had known; but when he looked up in surprise he felt instinctively that Marion must have her way, and returned to his wine of the by-gone period he comprehended.

Lloyd was no longer watching her. He feared the present lightness of her glance. Nevertheless, he flashed ahead. "Fortunately, you approved of the author's work as well as the compositor's."

"Oh, yes; but you leave one famished at the end."

Instantly he forgot her and all things save the subject. For a moment his work became paramount again. The moonshine was obscured by shadows. "Those who

seek the greatest good must be brought to feel that desperate need."

"And offered nothing?"

"There is little to offer. It is in themselves."

His eyes were deep in hers for a single instant. She could scarcely withstand their penetration.

He always remembered the look she gave him.

At the centre of the table stood a low, silver candelabrum, an infinitely gentle and effulgent light circling the immediate vicinity of its branches.

Marion's face, above the level of the radiance, and hooded in the shadows of the surrounding gloom, seemed to him in that moment like the face of a sacred picture above the candles of an old-world shrine. Had he not seen it in one of the dim-lit chapels of a vast cathedral—a telling yet illusive face; a face intended, no doubt, for the Madonna, but in reality Venetian, and passionately fair? In spite of the hallowing radiance, in spite of the nimbus above her brow, this was a face possessed of a human sovereignty, a deep though as yet a latent capacity for all the stress and strength and fulness of woman's love.

"Yes," she repeated, slowly; "the need is in themselves."

There was something so earnest in her voice, something so deeply simple in her eyes, that all at once the god in Enoch began to despise the cub. He longed to be alone with her, to talk without the necessity of interlarding hints and resorting to the tricky turns of a double conversation. It seemed only congruous that she should be approached through the loftier and more clarified atmosphere of her own nature; almost essential that the flame within him should leap to the hidden fire in herself. This is the pyromancy of love. Rapidly her personality exalted him, until at a single bound he was for naming to himself the power of her attraction.

Rash as ever, he called it love. If only he could take her away with him into the night again, away from custom, and there give himself free rein, every pent-up thought its liberty!

Thus and so, bridled and chafing, he champed the bit of convention, impatient for his maiden race, hot for the freedom and dash of an unrestrainable wooing. Perhaps it was only the sight of that moon-metamorphosed shore; perhaps it was the present restraint that carried him away or the mere surprise and glamour of a first enchantment. He made no attempt to define it; reason was thrown to the winds.

Moodily towards the end of the dinner he sat heedless of the conversation, answered "yes" for "no" and *vice versa*, till the talk was topsy-turvy, and Mr. Lee, now and then raising his impractical glasses to one and the other bewilderedly, might as well have been teaching botany to the moon. Even Marion herself seemed to catch the strange aphasia. Where strategy had failed to disconcert her, this open insanity began to tell. She was on tenter-hooks for fear he would betray himself, and yet, underneath it all, fascinated by that very hazard.

"I shall plant," observed Mr. Lee, "a row of coreopsis under the dining-room windows."

Murmurs of approval.

"Or how would a line of cannas do?"

"Splendidly."

"On the other hand, cosmos—"

"Yes, cosmos; decide on that."

"Perhaps we'd better, and then I can put the coreopsis—" He paused to consider the question.

"Yes," said Lloyd.

Mr. Lee gazed at him abstractedly. "What?"

"Oh, nothing; I was only thinking that—er—the water-lilies—"

"Water-lilies?"

"I mean, the cosmos might look better—under the dining-room windows."

Marion nodded. "I think Mr. Lloyd is right."

"Of course," exclaimed Mr. Lee, "but why in the world— Well, didn't you know we had just decided the matter? You seem to be losing your interest in my flowers."

"No, no, father!"

"Well, how about the coreopsis, then? I wonder if it would not—"

"No," echoed Lloyd.

Mr. Lee sat back in his chair with a vague restlessness. Something disquieting was afoot, something troublesome. "I beg your pardon; what did you say?"

Enoch coughed.

"Mr. Lloyd was saying," interposed Marion, "that he had not lost his interest in your flowers."

"H-um!" exclaimed the little old gentleman, beginning to grow testy. "I didn't know he ever had any." Whereupon, frowning in bewilderment at the tablecloth, he fell to a deep abstraction. Every period has its refuge. With youth it is the glittering surface, with age the haze of generalities.

Marion looked upbraidingly at Enoch; Enoch ruefully at the moon.

It was one of those moments when nothing is plausible and nothing should be. Silence, with an eternal separation of glances, is the only safe retreat. If in two minutes the eternity is past and gaze creeps round to gaze again, trouble brews to overflowing. That second meeting of the eyes is far more fatal than the first. Something mutual is behind it.

Lloyd sighed. It was taking Mr. Lee years to eat a banana. He seemed to delight in mouthfuls that would have piqued the hunger of a bird, and between each morsel there evidently lay an entire system of philosophy.

Then at last the Fates relented.

A tall figure crossed before the open window. They heard a footstep on the veranda. The brass eagle of the front door fell with a rap.

Mr. Lee shifted uneasily and drew himself together, as though summoning the strength of his prime for an unpleasant encounter. "I can guess who it is."

Marion looked indignant. "Surely *he* has not—"

"Yes, I knew he would come to spoil my summer holiday."

The sound of a voice reached them from the hall. In a moment Timothy entered to announce the visitor. Evidently the personality of this guest had antagonized him. He scowled. Years of loyal service had taught him a just discrimination. Moreover, his faithful and taciturn allegiance had long ago won him the family confidence, a trust that consisted of unrestrained conversation between father and daughter in the dining-room.

He scowled, and something harsh in his tone as he spoke the name suggested a menace from the old watchdog.

"Mr. Matthew Steele."

XII

A Knight of the Moon Rampant

MR. LEE rose from the table wearily. "On from New York to ruin my holiday; but perhaps it's just as well."

"Matthew Steele?" repeated Lloyd. "Is he the publisher of—"

"Trash," replied Mr. Lee; "only trash hammered out by hacks, popular in the kitchen."

At this they heard a low cough of remonstrance from the antiquated retainer, who straightway left the room. Mr. Lee glanced after him in surprise; but Marion laughed. "Timothy resented the implication. You spoke of Steele as popular in the kitchen."

Instantly the situation changed. Mr. Lee chuckled. Humor, with him, was the little leaven that leavened his whole existence. His eyes, a moment before dejected, now twinkled with satisfaction. "Not in our kitchen. Oh, never! I owe the old stand-by an apology." Mr. Lee straightened himself. "Well, I must be going."

"Do you suppose he has come to make an offer?" asked Marion.

"Of course he has. Imagine it!" The publisher turned to Lloyd, and it was evident that his fingers were fumbling one another under his coat-tails. "Imagine it!" The coat-tails flapped emphatically. "He dares to hope he may gain control of my business. Think of the respectable firm of Stephen Lee and Company at the mercy of such a man!" The tails fell flat, and Mr. Lee's

chubby hands, breaking from under, made a gesture of expostulation.

"Preposterous!" exclaimed Enoch.

"Yes, it is certainly preposterous—ludicrous! But I hope he does make an offer out and out. Then he shall have my answer." With which Stephen Lee, gallantly nerving himself, started for the door.

"Father," said Marion, "be careful!" But the little old gentleman, preoccupied in the mustering of self-reliance, walked out heedlessly to the field of battle.

"He is so absent-minded," mused the girl, "that nowadays I fear they often get the best of him."

Lloyd made no response. The fact that they two were again alone obscured unselfish considerations.

They were again alone, and yet his tongue was tied. The intrusion of disquietude on her father's account had taken her so far away.

The silence grew difficult.

Enoch surveyed a scene from the Arthurian legend enacted on the wall-paper. A hand and sword were rising from the centre of a cobalt lake. On the verge stood the king and gazed at the enchanted weapon.

"From *this* spirit of the water," observed Lloyd, "the man gained a power with which to shape his destiny."

Marion glanced at the blue figures. "True, but the mystery of that spirit he never fathomed. Come, shall we go out on the veranda? It's pleasanter on warm evenings."

She led the way from the dining-room, and soon was seated in a hammock near the veranda's step, Lloyd on the step itself.

Through the open window of the library came the sound of two voices, one tremulous, with an occasional note of apprehension or querulousness, the other metallically hard. From without came other voices—the tide's

murmur, the pine-trees' sigh, the locusts' intermittent wheezing, and occasional plaints from a solitary owl. The moon rode just above the orchard, whose trunks and branches threw gnarled shadows in the dog-grass, while near in the foreground glistened conspicuous the blossomy chaplet of Pan.

Lloyd looked hammockward. "It is hardly fair," he ventured; "you are in the darkness, whereas I—"

The hammock began to swing gently. "Oh, I thought you were in the dark, whereas I—"

He laughed in spite of himself. "In one sense, yes; I am in the dark." His eyes darted through the obscurity in search of her own and found them. "In the dark save for two stars—"

The hammock rocked faster.

He persisted. "Save for two stars—" He paused; then quickly, "What wouldn't I give for the immediate services of an astrologer!"

Faster still the hammock.

He flashed ahead. "An astrologer who could read, in those twin stars, my horoscope."

The hammock stopped. "Mediæval!" breathed its occupant. Leaning forward, she began to study, with naïve self-forgetfulness, this creature of her new world. The movement brought her out of the shade. He saw her features, saw the glow of her hair warming the moonlight it reflected. Her eyebrows frowned, but the lights under them were sparkling. "That's the way the knight of the wall-paper would talk." She touched the floor with one foot, so to set the hammock a-swing again. "But the knight of the wall-paper," she airily added, "says nothing at all; he knows better."

Lloyd looked off across the water, and, as if with harmless innocence, flitted from the subject. "Scarcely a breath of a breeze, is there?"

"Scarcely."

"I sha'n't be able to go home in the boat—do you think so?"

"Not without rowing."

"It was different last night."

"Yes."

"But rather dark for sailing before the moon rose.

"Rather."

"Yet I suppose you know your way about the bay by instinct. The darkness didn't matter."

"Not much."

"Oh, then you did sail last night?"

It was a stroke so telling that there came no answer. Her foot was thrust out at the floor of the veranda almost viciously, and the hammock rocked like a sailor's in a storm.

The violence of its motion seemed to affect Lloyd. Some inner mainstay was carried away by the tempest of the moment. He grew lawless, rash, piratical. He stood up. Grasping one end of the hammock, he bent over her with passionate intensity. "Tell me—tell me; was it you? I know it was, but say so. Say it was you who came to me on the shore, came to me as though—as though you alone in all the world understood me; came when I felt desperate with failure. In an instant I was not desperate; I had not failed. I had succeeded! Your eyes told me I had succeeded." He bent closer, clinching the cords of the hammock in a tense grip. "Tell me! Yes, you will." His eyes flashed; his breath quickened. "You shall!"

In the next moment he could have bitten his tongue off for that command.

She said nothing at first. To his surprise, she only rose slowly, and, going to the veranda's edge, stood there, tense, quick-breathing, palpitant.

He stepped down to the grass, and, looking up at her, seemed to be willing her away—shorewards.

To him in that moment she was inscrutable—a goddess without a name, and yet a hundred names; a fate, an oracle. The mere sight of her took him to larger spheres, calmed him with something of the same lofty quiescence inspired by the Grecian column near which she stood; with something, in fact, that hitherto had seemed peculiar to the House of Dreams—perfect in outline, majestic in simplicity.

Her figure spoke. The music of its lines enthralled him; and over them her hair—the vivid flame of her hair, hot in the pallid moonlight. He could see her profile—the high brow; the straight nose; the crimson lips, now parted in agitated breathing; the chin and its undershadows; could see her bosom rise and fall quickly, the dark bodice in definite relief against the column; could see all this, and feel yet more, while she stood there on the edge of the veranda, her nature speaking in a silence. Nevertheless, he could not know that to her the edge was the verge of a new world, the unexplored country of which his book had hinted—the Land of the Things that Are!

For a moment the impulse was strong in her to step down and follow him, and after that to wander a little by his side, to stroll in the orchard . . . down the lane . . . along the shore . . . *anywhere* . . . with him! But second thoughts prevailed. A lurking spirit of reserve, a woman's primeval instinct of escape, elemental love of privacy, a rebellion against his masculine "you shall"—all this constrained her from him.

She turned and started for the door. Instead of adventure in the Land of the Things that Are, she would seek refuge in the House of Dreams.

Whether or not the purpose of flight would have awakened in Lloyd a man's primeval instinct of pursuit, and what would have come of it, who knows? Alas for the liberty of the Arcadians, the impulses of both were nipped in the bud. Youth was pulled again at the post

—the post of his maiden race. Age stood full in the course—or, in material terms, the doorway. Mr. Stephen Lee appeared before them.

The very atmosphere throbbed.

Mr. Lee hesitated on the threshold, wondering. Things that he never noticed he often felt. Absent of mind by habit, and at present concerned with sundry emotions of his own, he nevertheless, as is the way of many wool-gatherers, surmised by intuition that which he would never have detected by observation.

Enoch assumed a careless air, and, turning away with a far-off look, appeared to become deeply interested in the look of apple-blossoms by moonlight. He strolled towards the orchard.

Marion flushed hot and hotter in the darkness.

The shadows teemed with guilty innocence.

She spoke. "Oh, father, I was troubled about you." She breathed hard. "I was coming in to see—" She broke off abruptly. What had she said? The words were deceitful. Spontaneously she had attributed her agitation to a foreign cause. Impossible! Always anything underhand and concealed, anything uncandid, had been revolting to her. In the simple code she had ever followed, deceit was the chief of crimes. Truthfulness had been nothing to be sought for, nothing to be acquired, nothing praiseworthy; it had been merely a part—an inherent part—of herself. And now—what had come over her? What had she said? To her father, above all! A thousand little pin-points of remorse began all at once to prick her. She realized that she had entirely forgotten her father and his interview. She had been so undutiful that merely by the influence of a new friend she had been led to ignore her father's trouble, and at last, in order to save herself from an embarrassing situation, had quibbled with the truth.

Mr. Lee took her hand. His voice trembled. Her

agitation soothed his ruffled spirits like a balm. Whatever that man Steele there in the library had said and done, here was one who by her girlish anxiety had already healed the sting. How her breast heaved! How she seemed to vibrate with feeling for him! How sweetly her eyes, catching the light of the windows, grew moist with daughterly concern! "My Marion!" was all he could say. "Maid Marion!"

She turned uneasily and glanced at Enoch, who was now an impalpable figure of moon-stuff and shadow. Then again she faced her father and her lashes drooped. Grasping one of his hands in hers, she drew it up, fondling it, with which, to his surprise, "No, no," she whispered; "no, I wasn't thinking of you! Forgive me." She stood back erect, like one who has thrown aside a momentary burden. "It was something else."

At first Stephen Lee said nothing. Vaguely he understood; realized that changes were in the air — a new order—disquietude. Why and how, what and wherein, he was never given to asking. Everything natural he took for granted. Given a youth, given a maid, given a book in which she learns to know him, a moonlight night in which he feels her eyes, and what more natural than a boy who strolls away, a girl whose breast is heaving? Moonshine it might be, nothing more; only an illusory idyl of the moment. And as for the slight, the first neglect, the instinctive swerve of the filial, was it not all in accord with the most beautiful cruelty of nature? The unselfish heart of Mr. Lee ignored old proverbs and similes—bitter similes anent the inevitable flight of offspring. Or if down deep for an instant he felt a lack, a wrench, the first pang of a parent's loneliness, he routed that feeling without a word. The sense of cruelty was hidden; the sense of beauty glossed it over. Mr. Lee dwelt on the seemliness of the case, harbored a pleasanter metaphor, thought of his flowers, their bourgen-

ing; dwelt, too, on the naturalness of it, the universality, and humbly denied himself a protest.

All this in a moment, while, either from forgetfulness or purpose, he neglected at first to reassure her of his leniency.

Suddenly he passed her with a brisk step and glanced about for Enoch.

The culprit, aloof at a gate on the lane-side, was frowning skyward at the unmanageable universe.

"Lloyd!"

"Father, surely you won't—"

But Enoch, having turned his back upon the universe, was already within ear-shot.

Marion saw breakers ahead. She knew her father. Doubtless he would indulge in kindly but firm remonstrance, the amiability of which a youth fresh from frowning at the universe would scarcely pause to imitate or admire. Whereafter they would set to brewing a tempest in the proverbial teapot, a fiery concoction in the illicit still of temper. It never occurred to Marion that she personally need not share the unpleasantness of the prospective outbreak. Her first feeling of embarrassed apprehension and her fleeting wish to withdraw from the scene were instantaneously overcome by a peculiarly complex emotion, a sense of guardianship, an instinct of loyalty towards—which? The question disturbed her. Why was she waiting while the offender returned with hesitant step? Had it come to this: that in the event of an altercation between her father and Enoch Lloyd her position already would be neutral? Could it even be—no, perish the thought! She flouted a worse misgiving. But there is no neutrality in woman. Marion, at heart, was taking sides. In spite of itself your Heart o' Love is a turncoat. It deserts the camp of its fathers. Where, now, are the faded banners, the dusty and gray old standards by which it has been led? Time

was when they meant security and safe protection. Time is when they flap deserted and meaningless save as pathetic emblems of an outgrown cause.

Who pitches his tent before the old one? Who dares? What leader is this approaching? A youth? Ay so, for a god is youthful. A youth? Yes, for the flag he flies is the evening sky, the silver sky, and the device of the flag is a moon rampant! Who but a god can wave the heavens? Who but a youth? To him! To him, Heart o' Love! Hie on! Go out to the wooer militant! Quick, through the lines, and away! Old affections cannot picket you from love. This alone is fair in love that's not in war: you may desert with flying colors; you may greet the flag of the moon with your own of the two twin stars; you may play the turncoat proudly! Nevertheless, later on — remember! Once again look back. Somewhere in the valley behind you flaps the cast-off flag on a lonely pole. Perhaps the last shred of your earliest sacred emblem is being furled.

Marion touched her father's hand. Her eyes, under lowered lashes, greeted Lloyd's. It never occurred to her then that her sky-bearer had, in the moment of Mr. Lee's appearance, sauntered away from the difficulty and left her to bear its brunt. His withdrawal but proved the delicacy of his nature. Your Knight of the Moon Rampant is also a "parfit gentil knight"; he is, in fact, nor more nor less than the image of the spirit of the maiden who with a look bestows upon him his accolade.

Since his call to Enoch, Mr. Lee had maintained an ominous silence. This, together with frequent blinks and scowls, had effectually counteracted the appreciative twinkle of his eye. Covertly he enjoyed the situation. He had put the pair in a feaze. It served them right to be on tenter-hooks a moment. There is discipline in tenter-hooks. Mr. Lee derived quite as adequate a satisfaction of revenge from this pretty little piece of mis-

chievous dissemblance as one of a less amiable temperament would have obtained from thunder and lightning.

Presently Lloyd stood at the veranda steps and nerved himself. To do this he mentally retreated and found refuge in the imaginary whistling of an air. Except for politeness' sake he would have whistled it aloud as an evidence of debonair tranquillity.

Marion, on the contrary, direct and open to circumstance, began to feel an inward stir and glow, as though some latent but reliable power were now for the very first time to be tested. On the upper step she stood, a tacit intercessor, waiting.

Small need! Much ado about nothing!

Mr. Lee, resting a hand on her shoulder, looked impersonally down at Enoch. "Lloyd," he declared, "I need the assistance of a third person in the library."

Already his thoughts were back with business; already his vengeance was appeased.

Oh, the relief of that moment!

Marion reseated herself in the hammock. Enoch thanked his stars. It was as though all at once things of the night-time about them drew freer breath. The lull of suspense was broken. The moon rose up above a pine-tree. The pine-tree sighed with satisfaction. Arcady was itself again. Down in the bog near the water a bull-frog laughed.

Mr. Lee meditatively lighted a cigar. "Yes, Lloyd, I need you." He twirled the flickering match between a thumb and short forefinger. "This man Steele must be extinguished—so!" With a puff of decision he blew out the match. "Of course I could do it alone"—he squared his shoulders and compressed his lips thinner on the cigar —"but you see—" He hesitated; the shoulders bent again; he took the cigar in his fingers, and, turning it about, eyed it as though considering the brand. "Well,

you see, I need a witness who can understand my position."

Lloyd glanced wonderingly towards the library window. "I shall be glad—" he began.

"And besides," continued the publisher, "I wish to set you an example." He laid a hand on Lloyd's shoulder. "I want to emphasize in your presence the necessity of maintaining an up-hill course." He said this in even tones, with none of that jerkiness which a moment before had betrayed an effort to regain some power fast declining with the years. The steady gentleness of his advice seemed a good deal stronger than any of his intermittent self-assertion. He had fallen back on the strength of age. The change was both impressive and graceful.

Lloyd inwardly swore allegiance to the cause of this fatherly old gentleman. "I shall take great pleasure—" he commenced.

"It is, of course, only proper that you should know the facts," pursued Mr. Lee, who had a way of disregarding interpositions unless they positively staggered him into notice. "You see, it's like this. Steele has a hankering after dignity and solidity of reputation. His own business mints money but lacks prestige. Strangely enough, it fails to satisfy him. He is always wanting something. First it was a fortune, now it is standing, and next—but who knows the limit of his aim? He reaches with a long arm. To him there are no sour grapes in the world. He concedes the sweetness of the loftiest and smacks his lips."

Mr. Lee knocked an ash from his cigar. His own lips at the moment were puckered and moving in the ruminative way of affable old gentlemen who chew the cud of experience and at the same time lull their tongues in the flavor of a good Havana.

Lloyd glanced again towards the library window. The

man in there was doubtless worthy of interest. Already Enoch began to feel his personality.

"As I have said," continued the publisher, "he even hopes to buy me out. You see, it's like this—" Again he paused, hesitant, loath to explain, more than ever crestfallen. Then, with an effort, and flicking the cigar though the ash was gone, "I've lost money!" Whereupon he fell to smoking and smoking till a veil of cloud, pearly in the moonlight, obscured his face and the silence became oppressive.

Enoch looked everywhere but at Marion. Once more the hammock was ominously still. He shared the constraint that kept it so.

Soon, however, the cigar began to tell; it relieved the tension. If Mr. Lee's pride had parted from him with this dire assertion from his lips, the sting of it followed after in a puff by the same outlet, and presently dissolved in the filmy nothingness of tobacco smoke. "Yes," he resumed, at length, "of late my publications have been unsuccessful—very, indeed!" He bent a look of fellow-sympathy on Lloyd, who, having detected a personal note in the publisher's voice, had lowered his glance, and now appeared to be assiduously counting the cracks or floor-planks of the veranda. Apparently his patron caught a glimpse of the world of complexity that lay behind this attention to trivial straight lines. "Yes, Lloyd, *your* book is among the many. We may as well make no bones of the fact. Well, perhaps I've considered the profits too little in recent years. Between my way and Steele's I suppose there's a happy medium which both he and I have missed. Undoubtedly there are many who combine the dignity of my generation with the progressive methods of yours, and yet how hard it is to maintain a standard! You see, it has always been my aim to issue lasting and needed books—works that might endure as contributions to our national literature,

not ephemera produced solely in the interest of trade. I knew intimately Nathaniel Hawthorne, Longfellow, Lowell, Whitman, and others of their rank, and once in my boyhood I met Poe. These names long ago fixed a level for me, and I never could bear to fall very far below it. What is the result? I am to-day almost insolvent. Ever loath to publish a large amount of trash in order to support the little of true merit, I have all but failed. Sentiment is always a beggar in the end. And yet, Lloyd, I've clung to the rags of it; yes, to the very rags."

Again he paused, and moistening at the tip of his tongue a frayed end of the cigar, rerolled it, then turned to Marion. "Isn't it so? And Steele wants to bargain for the remnants!"

To this the response was unequivocal. The perfect clarity, the deep certainty of her voice rang long after in Enoch's ears. "Yes, to bargain for your ideals."

The effect of this was good to see. Mr. Lee seemed all at once to receive an infusion of new life. Instead of dawdling with reminiscence and explanation he came at once to the point. Fanning away with one hand the thought-freighted smoke that hung heavy between him and Lloyd, he spoke with unaccustomed fire. "Yes, yes; that's it! Come, Lloyd, we'll see about this! Steele shall have my answer. What's that—what—"

He broke off suddenly. Enoch was facially signalling to him. He followed the covert glances. They led to the open window of the library. Then he understood.

The upper half of a tall figure, framed by the casing, formed a disturbing silhouette against the dimly lit interior.

Marion and Enoch stared. Mr. Lee suppressed an exclamation of dismay. What was there, though, save to make the best of it?

"Mr. Steele, I want to introduce Mr. Lloyd."

A long arm reached out over the sill. Enoch stepped up to the veranda and shook hands with the legless shadow. The features were invisible. The obscurity caused by the veranda roof shrouded them in darkness. Lloyd found himself meeting a ghostly sort of thing that said nothing. The hand felt glacially hard, like marble.

The dramatic mind of Enoch conceived portents. There was something grim about the introduction, something uncanny. The black form, cut in two by the sill—the flat form, silent and inscrutable — oppressed him. Quickly he withdrew his hand, but the moment of its contact, the feel of that first touch, lingered lastingly, as if he had grasped the hand of a statue or a corpse.

All this, of course, was rapider than thought, being a sudden impression of the senses. Meantime, outwardly matter-of-fact, he was saying, "How do you do?" in the tone of a man who receives an honor. Despite his instinctive recoil, was it possible that something in him admired the lanky shadow, the enigmatical form of attainment? Was it possible that something in him turned its back on the high-minded gentleman who had lately confessed himself unfortunate? Perhaps so, for secretly, no matter who the two, success receives a tacit homage from failure.

Not improbably Lloyd recognized this incipient admiration, and instantly choked it back as the tribute of a groundling. At all events, he was for opposing that Nemesis-like figure then and there. Consequently the battle-signal of Mr. Lee, "Come, Lloyd, we'll settle this matter in the library," peculiarly satisfied his present humor.

The old publisher, now hot for a clash, forgot his usual polite formality and straightway entered the house in advance of his lieutenant.

Enoch, hesitating an instant, glanced at Marion. She was looking out into the night, as though forgetful of his

presence. While he stood above her, lingering, evidently loath to go, she raised her eyes, and their question, asked of space, seemed for one moment to demand a response from him. Now for the first time he could look into them, could lose himself in their deep limpidity and experience that rarest paradox — the descent into a woman's nature whose depth is the height to which a man would rise.

Time pressed. "I must go," whispered Enoch; "but I'll hurry back. Stay here! I want to ask—" He paused. There was time for a word both ways. The riddle of the shore phantom cried to heaven for solution.

He bent over her, swiftly insistent.

At the same instant Stephen Lee, impatient for his ally, appeared at the window. "Lloyd!" he ejaculated, "Mr. Steele says business is business. Aren't you—"

But already the dilatory moon-raker was rushing headlong into the house.

XIII

A Sockdolager

A LEAN, tall, and prominent-jointed individual, spare of shoulder, sallow, loose-clothed, sparse-haired, colorless, mediocre — this at first glance was Lloyd's impression of Matthew Steele.

In three minutes, however, the man's exterior was forgotten, his personality felt. Incisive, never wordy, absolutely self-possessed, he presented a sharp warning against judgment by appearances. If his physique seemed to be incontinently laughing at his calm ego, that ego appeared indifferently to ignore the irregularities of his physique.

Lloyd had an opportunity to study him, Mr. Lee being now seated at a large writing-table in the middle of the library, where, with an extended gaze into his cigar smoke, he frowningly strove to shape an adequate ultimatum. It would be easy enough to decline Steele's offer, but very difficult to impress such a man with the full meaning of the refusal.

On the other side of the table stood their calm antagonist, the fingers of one hand resting on its top. Facing Lloyd, he inspected the young author casually, and for a moment said nothing.

"So this," quoth Enoch to himself, "is Matthew Steele; this is the so-called 'Patron of the Popular'; this is what Cuthbert Morton means by 'a walking backbone.'" After which statement of the case Enoch began to feel a trifle awkward under the cool scrutiny of the

other, and remarked on the pleasantness of the evening—a triviality that Steele not even by a nod of the head was at pains to agree with or deny. He kept looking at and into the youth before him.

But soon from the other side of the writing-table came relief. Mr. Lee looked up with gathering coherence. "It is, indeed, a pleasant evening—Mr. Steele has afforded me a pleasant opportunity. He has offered me a large fortune for the name 'Stephen Lee and Company,' under which he wishes to continue his business. My answer, as you may imagine"—here he blinked mysteriously and moistened his lips with a relish—"gives me much satisfaction. There cannot be the slightest—"

Before he could finish his prepared surprise, Steele spoke, and, thanks to a dull, penetrative, metallic note in his voice, there was no listening to any thoughts other than those he inspired. He spoke slowly; he spoke hard. His accents seemed made for consonants. The words had no bearing whatever on those of Mr. Lee. They came as a conclusion to his protracted gaze at Enoch. "Mr. Lloyd, I could *make* you in a month."

Whereafter, for a long moment, the silence was unbroken save by a quicker puffing of cigar smoke from their host.

Enoch was staggered, embarrassed—all at sea. His cheeks flushed. He smiled inadequately. Nothing suggested itself as the right response.

"I could make you," reiterated Steele, "*famous*."

Lloyd laughed a low, incredulous laugh, that may have been meant to denote indifference, but suggested, whether he would or not, humility. He glanced at Mr. Lee.

The old publisher was evidently agitated. His eyes, behind the haze of smoke, were angry. Nevertheless, he could not speak at once, the personality of Steele was so benumbing.

"It's a pity," observed Steele—"a great pity."

"What is?" ventured Lloyd, sliding his fingers idly on the table-top.

"That your fluent style has not been turned to better account. Yes, I've read *The Greatest Good.* We're always on the lookout, you know, for young blood; and somehow you have the hang of the thing, but you've wandered off in the wrong direction."

"I've done my best," muttered Lloyd, and wondered at the meekness with which he said it.

Steele inclined his head gravely. "That's the trouble. You've done too well. You should have got your public first, and afterwards blossomed out. My motto has always been, 'Begin low down.' You've got to do it. It's the only way."

Lloyd's brows contracted. "In some things — yes; but—" He hesitated, his objections losing shape.

Steele's lower jaw slightly protruded. "No, Mr. Lloyd, it's so in everything. Take my own case. My first experience with the kind of literature Mr. Lee reveres was the usual portion of a man who spends his life outside front doors. I peddled classics. My patronage of standard authors in those days barely fed me. Naturally, I preferred success with what Mr. Lee terms twaddle to failure with unremunerative genius."

Mr. Lee stood up. "An experience like yours is scarcely—"

But the colorless eyes of Steele never swerved from Lloyd. "Your book, for instance," he interrupted, with rude persistence, "has failed. I would never have dreamed of publishing it. I would have toned you down. I would have insisted on a plot. It pays to have thrills and plenty of color." He clinched his fist in emphasis. "I would have drilled you in the knack of catching the public. You've got to do that at first." He pressed the emphatic fist against the table-top and every word was

like the stroke of a hammer. "Ideals and righteousness be damned! You've got to get hold of the people!"

"But—" began Lloyd again, with rising indignation, then once more hesitated and swept back the hair from his forehead with uneasy fingers.

"There are no 'buts,'" declared Steele, with a ponderous shake of the head. "I know a clever woman who once said, '"Ifs" and "buts" are weeds in the garden of language.' That sounds like a book. It's one of the few booky things that are true. Perhaps the floweriness of it will appeal to Mr. Lee." He glanced sideways across the table and smoothed his mustache downward with his palm. "Succeed first, then you can dabble in beautiful nonsense. Success can't fail; it can afford to take chances." He jammed his protruding knuckles hard against the writing-table. Lloyd saw the semi-forefinger whiten with the pressure. "You should reduce everything to business principles. With you it's the same as with me. The whole thing is a question of business. Don't stay here. This is no place for work. Get into the crowd. Come to New York." He paused. "Remember this: get a hand on life and begin low down. There must be no 'buts'!"

For the first time Mr. Lee smiled. "But," he said, and chuckled.

Steele, turning, looked at him in calm surprise.

"*But*," repeated Mr. Lee, and pursed his lips with amusement.

Steele laughed a short, clipped laugh, that caused the sole remaining partner of the firm of Stephen Lee and Company to straighten up and lift his glasses.

"I said 'but,'" remarked Mr. Lee, portentously.

Steele raised his scanty eyebrows. "Which means?"

"Which means," proclaimed the little old gentleman, his chubby cheeks reddening, "that there *is* a 'but' sometimes. Which means that if business is business it is

occasionally something more. Which means — but, of course, you have guessed the tenor of my answer."

Steele's lips parted in a smile that showed two lines of discolored teeth. "I'm not given to guessing," he said; and, seating himself in an easy-chair, he drew from his breast-pocket a long cigar, which, without lighting, he began to mouth.

Mr. Lee continued. "I've taken the liberty of admitting Mr. Lloyd to our interview partly for my own sake, largely for his, though, it's true, not at all for yours. Mr. Lloyd and I are in a similar position. We have both done our best; we have both failed in the worldly sense, but have succeeded in another. We shall continue together up-hill." He smiled at Enoch with confident cheerfulness. "Am I not right, Mr. Lloyd?"

Without knowing why, Enoch felt somewhat shamefaced; therefore his answer was doubly fervent. "Yes, yes—up-hill."

Steele's slow glance moved around to the young author, and he shrugged with the air of one who doubts an exception to a world-wide rule.

"I trust," pursued Mr. Lee, advancing from behind the table, "you will forgive me if I am somewhat severe." Even now his old-fashioned courtliness and the duties of a host were not forgotten.

Steele rose from the arm-chair and stood with his back turned, inspecting the portrait of the famous publisher. "Go ahead," said he, "if it pleases you."

Mr. Lee glanced up, not at his own portrait, but at that of his martial ancestor. Lloyd, catching his trend, noticed for the first time a slight similarity of expression. He wondered if Stephen Lee had fashioned for himself a weapon one-half so keen of edge and ruthless in defence of liberty as that ancestral sword. It seemed improbable. Nevertheless, since Marion had stated the case

as being an attempt at bargaining for ideals, her father, inspirited with new force, had seemed brave as a little David before this inscrutable Goliath.

Lloyd waited impatiently, but still Mr. Lee delayed. Like warriors of old, he could scarcely refrain from a preamble, from the *gylp-spraec*, proclaiming a mortal combat.

"My reply to you has an edge," he announced, with a quaintly childish air of pride. "I must adopt your own succinctness of phraseology. One must fight Steele, you know, with steel!" Whereat he shot a look at Lloyd, eloquent of naïve delight in his own humor, and, thrusting his hands under his coat-tails, spoke in this whimsical but telling fashion:

"Mr. Steele, this is the long and short of it: you are you, and I am I—a condition of affairs that possibly you, and certainly I, would be loath to reverse. Yet, to speak plainly, if I were you, I should prefer to be some one else. You traffic in the shoddies of literature; you deal in shams; you foist spurious articles on the public; you are a past-master in make-believe. The books you publish distort life. They are yellow to the core. Therefore you must remain you, and I—I! The combination you suggest is impossible. Extremes do not always meet—*we*, for example. I take great pleasure in rejecting your offer."

His answer thus pointedly delivered, Mr. Lee smiled with triumph at the narrow back of Matthew Steele.

Inwardly, Lloyd was applauding the effort. His eyes sparkled. The reply had proved a weapon, after all. And yet how incongruously Mr. Lee had wielded it! How quaintly unmartial he appeared!

Evidently the pithy ultimatum tickled the speaker's fancy. He glanced sideways at Lloyd with twinkling eyes and a short nod, as who should say, "How's that for a sockdolager?"

The enthusiasm in Enoch's face seemed to exclaim immoderately, "Tremendous!"

Steele turned, and, reseating himself in the arm-chair, pointed with his cigar to the portrait. "What book's that you're holding in the picture?"

Mr. Lee suppressed a gasp. The calm irrelevance of the query amazed him. Taken aback, he answered, bewilderedly, "It's our first publication, Spenser's *Faërie Queene.*"

"Huh!" ejaculated Steele—"a child's book. I never take any stock in juveniles. They don't pay."

Mr. Lee looked hopeless. "A child's book! Dear me, don't you know—" But he only sighed helplessly, as though in the presence of an impossible; then turning to Lloyd, "What," he asked, "is the world coming to?"

Enoch scarcely knew whether to smile or frown. He was experiencing a peculiar satisfaction, mingled with dismay—satisfaction because, whatever the whimsies of it, that answer had championed his better self; had voiced his genius; had guarded the nobility of his calling, and, like the pebble of David, had been slung with intent to kill; dismay because the Philistine ignored it. Unlike his prototype—as Mr. Lee might have expressed it had not the whimsies been suddenly dispelled—unlike his prototype, this giant kept his head. The hosts of the Lord were robbed of triumph; so at least thought Enoch.

There in the easy-chair, his long legs crossed and eyes casual, lolled Steele, unconcernedly mouthing his never-to-be-lit cigar, while Mr. Lee's face took on the uncertainty of a child's that puckers between distress and laughter.

Finally Matthew's gaze, from roving about the room, fell to the lengthy and pointed toe of his uppermost shoe. There it seemed to concentrate narrowly, till at last he spoke to the polished patent leather. "Plenty more fish in the sea. Stephen Lee and Company aren't the only

big ones. There's dignity to burn. Money gets what it's after." He looked up indifferently at Mr. Lee. "I suppose you don't mind if I stay a few moments? The train doesn't go for thirty minutes yet. Hack 'll be out here for me in ten."

Mr. Lee nodded absent-mindedly. Already the stress of the interview had told. It left his thoughts vague, dispersed, and rambling. Like an army after some indecisive battle, they roamed off wide afield, wanting naught save rest and comfort. Going to the bookshelves, he took down a small, dilapidated volume, seated himself in an arm-chair on the far side of the writing-table, and fell to browsing.

Enoch felt dispirited. The progress of the right, concerning which Mr. Lee had recently held forth, seemed to have sustained a set-back. Even the issue had petered out. Lloyd regretted the lack of sharp results. He would have liked to see a strong climax. Steele should have slunk away like a beaten cur; Mr. Lee should have worn the aspect of a victor. The fulness of life in Enoch rebelled against so smooth an ending. Life safeguarded him against a feeling of easy acquiescence. Something of the gallery-god in the youth of him, something too elemental ever to be ignoble, cried for the triumph of the hero. Unfortunately, one cannot hiss or applaud in a drawing-room, else the play might be differently enacted.

Lloyd felt useless. Neither of the two paid the slightest attention to him. He glanced at the open window. What was there now to keep him from her? Ought he to stay and oppose an opinion or two against Baal? What use? Baal would be Baal still.

Lloyd impulsively decided on a direr blow. The impulse was not without vanity. He would succeed. By her aid he would succeed. He would show Steele that ideals can win as well as "thrills and plenty of color."

Then he would be able to despise, in a way that at present, for some inexplicable reason, he could not despise, the "Patron of the Popular." Immediately he must invoke her sympathy, must share with her the outline of this glorious emprise.

Already assuming an air of condescension—so long are the leaps of hope—he bowed a good-night to Matthew Steele.

In a moment he was on the veranda.

She had gone.

He spoke her name. No response. He scanned the slope. Not a figure. He hurried down to the orchard whose twisted trunks were duplicated each by a prone and yet more twisted shadow in the moonlit dog-grass underneath. Not a single straight and slender form. All was gnarled — branches and shadow branches; all was haunted and misshapen—a place of silver patches and enormous arabesques. He went to the lane. It meandered shoreward, unreal, untrod, its two deep ruts suggesting the furrows of a phantom plough. Not here. He gazed at the shore. There was not a ripple on the water. Still the two boats lay moored together, sails furled. He retraced his steps, went to the veranda, hesitant between the open window and the long path homeward by which he had determined to walk for want of a breeze. Rowing to-night would require too much exertion.

Five minutes of the ten had passed. Steele glanced over at Mr. Lee. "Lloyd rich?"

"No, poor. Just enough, I fancy, to live on."

Steele surveyed the ceiling. "Royalties, of course, next to nothing. It's too bad. He's clever, what's more. I tell you it's folly to ignore the demand of the public. When they want blood and thunder, give it 'em. When they want problems, give 'em those, too. When

they want religion— Hang the thing! It's as much a question of style as straw hats."

Mr. Lee sighed wearily and said nothing. He was gazing abstractedly at a small stretch of moonlight which, between him and the window, slanted across the floor. A slender shadow clove the centre of the patch. At first Mr. Lee, surveying the form, subconsciously ascribed it to one of the Doric columns. But no, it was not so still, not so straight; it wavered.

"He will have to begin," repeated Steele, "by catching the crowd."

The shadow bent and shortened. If this was the column, the column was toppling over—an absurdity, of course. Mr. Lee raised his glance to the window.

Enoch Lloyd was looking in. His eyes were reckless with disappointment. He spoke. "Good-night, Mr. Lee. I must be going." He smiled at Steele. "Good-night, Mr. Steele. Perhaps there is a good deal to be said on your side, after all;" with which he left them.

Mr. Lee started to rise and follow his protégé, but the strain of the recent encounter had fogged his mind. He could not think clearly. Settling back again, he turned the pages of his book with listless fingers.

"What are you reading?" presently asked Steele, smiling at his cigar.

"I'm not reading."

"No?"

"No."

"Well, what's the book?

"Oh," replied Mr. Lee, gazing at the empty window, "this is that first copy of *The Faërie Queene*." He closed the ragged volume, sighing.

XIV

The Temple of Sleep

APPARENTLY, Marion had gone to bed—had calmly, indifferently, betaken herself to her room and shunned a tryst with her sky-bearer. Apparently, she preferred her prison walls to Elysian adventure with a Knight of the Moon Rampant. Actually, she had done nothing of the kind. It is not the way of a Maid Marion. She needs the sky, she needs the stars, the trees, the water. What better refuge than solitude in the out-of-doors?

Marion had sought the shore instinctively. Often of a summer's night, when her father was away, she would stroll hither by the lane, and, lying down in her boat, would embark, as she said, on a voyage at anchor. Thus, with the water whispering underneath, it was her way to lie by the hour looking up at the stars, losing herself in the heights, imagining a new astrology. Of astronomy proper she knew little, could name only the two Bears and larger planets, could recall nothing of the distances. What need? She felt an influence, and the distances meant more unmeasured. She was part of the bright-stelled universe — a little, living, breathing part, creaturely serene, aquatic, sylvan. This, till to-night—but to-night how different! True, she had sought the same surroundings, but what unwonted agitation in the seeking! It was as though she were pursued. Her steps in the quiet lane no longer bespoke a rambler. Whether she would or not, her feet made haste, barely touched

the tufts and furrows of the pathway. And when she reached the old stone dock and caught the *Ariel's* painter, when she stepped aboard and sank down on the cushions of the cockpit, where was the somnolence, where the dream? Could this be a voyage at anchor? She did not even look up to the heights; did not have recourse to that vague astrology. Something of a newer astrology possessed her, something by no means vague nor idly hallucinant. No more were the two Bears and a few planets controllers of her mood. Could it be the moon that claimed ascendency? Scarcely. The mere moon seemed too fantastic, hyper-romantic, theatric. Surely some new star had gone to its perihelion—some undreamed-of, world-transforming star.

She did not look up. Instead, she half reclined on her side, and, resting a cheek on one hand, gazed not at the sky, star-seeking, but up over the slope, past the orchard, to the house itself, as though the orbit of a star might possibly cross a veranda.

It did. The luminary, strange to say, soon made its appearance in the doorway. Her breath came fast. Would the star prove a meteor and descend upon her? Fearing so, she sank lower. But no; the celestial body seemed neither orbital nor meteoric. Its path was too uncertain. It came and went, down through the orchard, in and out amid the maze of shadow, the huge arabesques, to the lane, here and there hovering, more will-o'-the-wisp than star. Now back again to the house, to the open window; now down once more to the slope; then away, farther and farther, . . . slowly.

A look of dolor deepened the watcher's eyes. She began to regret that the star was not a meteor. First, fearful of its possible descent, she now deplored its passing. (So mysterious are the ways of this astrology.) Watching still, she gave the star a name, whispered "Enoch!" before it was lost to view, "Enoch!"—as

if to stay its wayward course, then suppressed the whisper.

But the world had heard; the trees on the shore, the water and the sky and the evening, all had heard. Only the star was deaf to her. Even Marion herself could not evade the meaning of her whispered call. She sat up, a new look, a timid, awe-inspired glow of pride and wonder kindling yet deeper in her eyes. What now were all the constellations in the almanac? The almanac of her heart contained but one. She had discovered a star, had named it; the sky was full. All space could hold no more.

She rose to her feet, free now to indulge her fancy. Enoch had gone. He was walking home. She would inspect his boat and study it a moment—of course, from a purely nautical stand-point.

She smiled at seeing the name of his skiff across its stern. He had called the boat *The Ruffian.*

Drawing the *Ariel* close to it, she made fast the painter to a cleat near his tiller and stepped aboard.

First she surveyed the rigging, cast a mariner's eye on the blocks and halyards, but soon was seated beside the tiller. Finally, with a look scarcely to be termed nautical, she stretched herself on the cushions and imagined that the captain of this enchanted craft was at the helm. Evidently the fancy had a pleasant touch; it soothed her mood. There was something unspeakably restful, ineffably contenting, in yielding the tiller to another hand. Never till now had she done so, even in reverie under the stars.

She looked up, and once again, but now with a new dreaminess, lost herself in gazing. Whither would he shape their course? To what fair haven would he steer? She foresaw no chance of danger; no storm yet brewed on the vague horizon. If it did, she would awake. The realization that this was only fanciful, that at any time she

could step ashore, lent her a feeling of pleasant security under the dream. Even this was a voyage at anchor. She had yet no heart for the casting adrift, none for the shoreless ocean, not a pulse-beat for the sea with its hazard and depth and vastness, its come-what-may. Elemental herself, and loving the natural elements, she nevertheless feared with a virgin timidity the elements of life.

But now, lying here, the danger past, Lloyd gone, she could almost have fallen asleep for contentment. Once again she was finding comfort in the primeval lap. As yet there was never a ripple on the bay; it slept. Only the heart of it, the tide, stirred beneath her. Nothing moved. Nothing moved, until at last the high, bright spots above appeared to recede yet higher and merge into one lone star; this, then, into the moon, . . . and she was drifting with the current of the Milky Way, on and on, . . . peacefully, . . . when finally the moon itself dissolved and she rose above the nebulæ of dreams.

The lull broke gently. A line of ripples from somewhere in the north titivated the water. A breeze with infinite subtlety touched her brow. Stealing about her hair, it spun her a halo in threads of fire and fanned the flame. This done, it hastened, freighted with destiny, along the shore. Busy of intrigue, it stole whispering hither and thither, till the leaves awoke and the water-side grasses, and at last, from his lonely despondence, the principal victim of its toils.

Enoch paused. The hair was straggling about his forehead. He surveyed the water. The moon-rays looked like a myriad shifting silver filings or scales of fish. They danced.

He listened to the faint commotion of the shore-side trees. It voiced the restlessness within him. He glanced off and above Mount Hope. A scud of small, keen clouds, winglike, silver-tipped, sable-edged, cut

the northern sky. The sight of their coherence sharpened his thoughts. He turned back towards the old stone dock. Why should he trudge and think? A breeze had sprung up. He would sail home. Perhaps it was just as well. Why should he leave the boat here, as an excuse to return and see her? How much better to have no excuse; then he would never return! Had she not deliberately left him, without even a good-night? The thing was an affront; the mere duty of a hostess should have kept her. But what cared he? Of course he must visit her again. Her neglect as hostess merited a studied courtesy from him as guest. Of course he must call. But he would never again question her about that fateful episode on the Mount Hope shore—and yet, if he did not, perhaps she would want him to, and if she wanted him to and asked him, and her eyes pleaded—those lucent eyes, dew-gray, sea-deep — if *they* implored, perhaps, after a long time—but no, not even then! He was now resolved ever to remain a perfect exemplar of serene politeness. The one formality of his life would be his friendship—or, rather, his acquaintance—with Marion Lee. . . . Marion Lee! He repeated the name. Now for the first time he had spoken her full name to himself. Now for the first time it assumed the meaning of a sound. Marion Lee! The name was a lyric in itself.

He stopped at the dock, an old structure with massive sides of stone, and earth between, yielding a strip of greensward from end to end. He glanced over his shoulder at the upper windows of the house. They were dark. Evidently Marion Lee, quite indifferent to thoughts of him, had fallen asleep. Marion Lee! The name hurt. He would sail away from it for good and all.

In another moment he was at the dock's end fumbling with a knot.

The tide had turned and was ebbing. *The Ruffian* lay drifting at painter's length—so far, in fact, that it almost

overran the small white buoy to which he believed the *Ariel* was moored. He glanced across to the fairy yawl. She nosed his boat's rudder as closely as if her line had become entangled in his sheet-rope or caught across one of the stern cleats.

Enoch untied the knot in hand. Nothing now remained but to make sail. Leaving the line about an old, decaying post, he retained the loose end and stepped aboard. Ordinarily he would now have secured that end somewhere forward, thus leaving a loop about the post to hold him until he had made sail and was ready to cast off. This had been his usual routine when the dock was high and he alone, and at present he took a dull delight in uneventful details. He was casting off, he dramatically assured himself—forever.

But suddenly, on glancing down, he started, paused breathless, and steadied himself against the mast. Thence he stood peering into the lower shadows, wonder-struck, amazed. The rope's end, dropping from his hand, trailed gently along the deck. He was utterly unheedful of its loss. The mere missing, however, of the feel of it between finger and thumb was not without effect. Something unpleasantly actual had fallen away. The dream had returned.

He yielded with dazed passivity to the spell. The dream had transcendentally returned—this and others, this and every dream worth dreaming! All of them now were interfused . . . blending, dissolving, recohering . . . old dreams and new . . . until at last, as he stood there losing himself in his downward gaze, one golden dream dispersed the rest—a dream of childhood. The vision reappeared to him now, after the years. Once again he had found the Sleeping Beauty. Once again in memory he stood beside a canopied bed of enchantment; stood, a boy, waist-high, accoutred in knightly harness, doffing his morion of the spotless plume; and

she was there beneath him, a little girl, her hair aflame, her face the mere expression of a moonbeam, her lips just parted for the freeing kiss.

This vision reappeared to him now, after the years, and he watched it with vague, unknowing eyes. Moment after moment he stood there leaning against the mast, looking idly downward, till the moon rode higher in the heavens and at last illumined the sleeper's face.

With a bewildered motion of one hand, Enoch swept back the hair from his forehead. Dare he test the spell? Dare he move? Scarcely. He knew she would go. Always he had awakened. It would be the same now as in his boyhood. The fact that finally those ever-to-be-remembered shadows had been withdrawn from before her face gave him no surety of possession. Never was covenant written in moonshine; rainbows are essentially of the sun. What if he could speak the Sleeping Beauty's name? This was but a dream, following like an epilogue the first one. Long ago he had found her, now he could name her. Long ago he had lost her, now he would lose her again. To-night she still was Mystery—passionate-haired, silver-faced, unknowable.

Lloyd clung to the mere impalpable sheen and splendor of the hallucination. He knew he was far from sleeping. Probably, too, he realized underneath his voluntary surrender to unreality that the idyl could stand a proving. Doubtless he knew that by some strange chance she was really there—Marion Lee, the girl of the columned house, an actual Sleeping Beauty. Nevertheless, the faint-heart stood long aloof, fearing, as it were, to lose his lofty balance, his intoxicating poise between phantasm and the real. Utterly oblivious of things about him—the increasing breeze, the tangle astern that lashed their boats together—utterly forgetful or unconscious of the trailing rope behind him, he stood there steeping himself in the contemplation.

At last, as though vaguely troubled, she turned, breathed restlessly, and lay on her side with face averted.

The spell broke. He lost the poise. Her face was now in shadow. The old spirit of pursuit, the need of her, reawakened within him. Noiselessly he descended and bent over her. Scarcely breathing, he knelt on one knee and, with chin in hand, resumed the thrall of gazing. Then gradually his expression changed, grew profounder, intenser, less vague. Here was no Knight of the Moon Rampant, nor yet a Knight of the Moon Couchant, but rather the chivalrous figure of some old picture, some dim-lit tapestry — a Galahad kneeling in sight of the Holy Grail.

Where was she then? How could he know? What right had he to call her thence, only to himself? Near as he knelt, there lay immeasurable distances between them. He felt a strange hopelessness in realizing that all communion, under the conditions of that absorbing moment, was inexorably withheld. And if he awoke her they would be separated even further by the shock to her reserve. He could not but confess to himself that she would be justified in resenting his vigil.

The confession disquieted his mood. Was he right to kneel and watch her—in a way, to possess her by so intimate a look? Awake, her eyes would have flashed rebuke; asleep, the lids and lustrous lashes, shrining dreams, were yet more eloquent—blindly eloquent—of reserve. Her helplessness aroused his chivalry. Galahad never looked at the Sacred Cup. In that ancient and dim-lit tapestry he kneels and bows his head before it. Something of this olden reverence influenced Lloyd. He lowered his gaze, and for a moment knelt so—a pilgrim to her nature.

The moonlight, as it touched her hair, warmed into an ambient glow, into a nimbus that seemed almost to confer its radiance on the watcher. In his ears the rhythm of

her breathing suggested a whisper from the spirit of the breeze. At last, on his bending nearer than he knew, the warmth of it touched his forehead.

He stood up as though to retreat from something, then forced himself to pause for a moment with a look of almost brotherly protection. Could he go and leave her here sleeping under the dew? If chivalry demanded his absence before she awakened, the merest platonics demanded his care. How reckless she had been to come here; how imprudent to run the risk of sleep! The air was growing chilly. Suppose it rained! He felt seriously perplexed. (Strange that the mutterings of the merest platonics should so distress his mind.) What ought he to do? The situation was embarrassing, to say the least. To wake her, said Chivalry, would be profanation, *and*, added Self, she would retire yet further from his grasp. To leave her, said Common-sense, would be unwise, because, added wild Anxiety, she might die of a cold. To the last conclusion, which positively forbade his leaving, Self whispered low assent. He could not go. Then Chivalry, ever quixotic, offered a new suggestion. Why not return to the house, tell her father, and walk home? To many so unusual a solution might have seemed little better than absurd. Pity these! With the jibers at Quixote they but fling a joke in that sorrowful countenance. They listen for no echo of stately music in the fol-de-rol of his long rampage. To them his helmet is a barber's ewer; they fail to observe its faint reflection of the sun.

Enoch turned and looked about him, then started with surprise.

The dock was nowhere to be seen. The shore had receded into a low-lying shadow far behind. The two boats, one in tow of the other, were drifting seaward with the tide.

XV

A Declaration of Dependence

THERE would have been something of infinite content in yielding to the external and natural powers that bore him through the night with Marion, something unspeakably pleasant in acquiescing to the mysterious ebb, the moon-drawn tide. What a universe of meaning to-night in the verb "to drift," what ineffable satisfaction in surrendering to nature! But no; Marion had become his charge. She was his, to be protected. He must put back and spare her, if possible, all knowledge of the voyage. She must wake where she had fallen asleep and imagine nothing. So quoth Galahad gallantly.

He made sail. In a moment *The Ruffian*, with *Ariel* still in tow, was beating back in the face of the wind and tide. Black and angular, contrasting strongly with the ethereal yawl behind her, she suggested some kind of sword-fish or huge sea-urchin, having for driver a nereid shining in her wake.

Enoch glanced at the *Ariel's* painter to make sure it was fast. Yes, on one of the stern cleats; and apparently it had been made so not by chance but purpose, as if Marion in visiting here had moored her craft to his, intending, no doubt, to remain aboard *The Ruffian* but a moment instead of—how long? How long? An hour —two—three? He had had no mind for measuring time. Of this, however, he felt certain: they had drifted far from Bristol. Already the town lights were sparse along

the water. Evidently most of the inhabitants were sleeping. At either side, on the long, rolling shores that seemed now to be passing astern with a serpentine motion, the scattered windows of farmers' and fishermen's houses were no longer to be seen.

The little clouds by now had flurried into a windy drift which flung its folds across the moon. The moment was dark. Only the great gleam from Slocum's lightship stretched towards them far ahead, like a finger groping for the truants. Lloyd realized that he must have passed the gaunt, black hull without even thinking of its proximity. He could regain it far less easily.

A bell rang. From Bristol, over the water, its peal—stentorian, dolorous, inexorable—reached his ears. It was the deep voice of a spire-clock, and again it tolled. Impatiently he counted.

Three . . . Four . . . Five. . . .

What sound more indescribably controlling than this of a mellow bell at night beyond the water? It leaves an impression on the ears consonant with that on the eyes of a sovereign though melancholy color. In some subliminal region, where the senses blend, purple is probably its unison—royal, funereal purple.

Six . . . Seven . . . Eight. . . . Slow, sonorous, reverberant, the native measure of evening.

Nine . . . Ten . . . Eleven. . . . Mournful, dominant, unequivocal, the typical monotone of Time.

Twelve. . . . A long, last stroke, the knell of one more day forever gone.

Then silence, appallingly profound.

Marion stirred. Either the bell or a more delicate influence, born of their newly begun resistance to the wind and tide, was militating against her slumber. Or perhaps yet a subtler sense was waking her—the sense of that after-silence.

She turned restlessly; her eyes opened; she sat up.

Lloyd was sensitive of an indefinable instinct against meeting her eyes in their first astonishment. He glanced instead at the mast-head, to survey the fluttering pennant with the air of a skipper attentive only to boat and breeze. Presently he felt her gaze. Doubtless at first she had been looking abroad, up and around, in bewilderment; then suddenly the figure of her captain had sprung into being at her side.

A low exclamation of surprise, almost a cry, escaped her.

Enoch, skipper no longer, lowered his glance to meet her own. There in her luminous eyes, usually so tranquil, dew-gray, sea-deep, something sensitive and disturbed suggested a reflection of the tremulous pennant at the mast-head. Her lashes fluttered; she looked away. Her glance took in the shadow-line of land, the lightship's gleam, the fretting water. It rested a moment on the harbor lights. That was Bristol, doubtless, and there the Mount Hope shore.

The moon now sailed through a narrowing isthmus of cloud.

Marion turned to Enoch. "What does it mean?" She stole a glance at his face—a puzzling profile, pale-bronze in the moonlight before the sail. "What does it mean?"

He studied the darkness ahead of them mysteriously. "That's what I am wondering."

"Wondering?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"Is it not natural that I should wonder what it all means?"

"I am not speaking about *it all*."

"But I am."

"By what right? I merely asked how this happened."

"Who knows?"

"Did you set us adrift on purpose?"

"No; I wish I had!"

"Why?"

"To show you my desperation."

"That's a strong word."

"So it should be."

"An exaggerative word."

"It can't be."

He looked ahead; then a moment of silence, while she covertly scanned his profile. The brow was a poet's, the nose a thoroughbred's, the lips a lover's, the chin an obstinate child's.

She refused to accept his metaphorical trend, timid at heart in view of its danger. After studying at a glimpse the irregular lines of his features, she turned to the more interpretable horizon. "Don't you think we'd better take the western channel? It's longer, but the tide is not so strong."

He nodded. "I am going to."

Her voice was low. "It must be very late."

He smiled, felt the tiller sensitive to his grasp, and seemed to gain thereby in power. "It is never too late."

The lights kindled from his eyes to hers, but her lashes drooped and veiled them. "It is sometimes too early."

At this he frowned, boylike, hesitant, wondering if she was right and the time had not yet come.

In the silence she looked back at her yawl, at the knot that held it in tow, and straightway became more animated.

"Then you really did not cast off on purpose?"

"No, it was fate." He pointed to the knot. "That is the bond of destiny. It lashes our boats together."

"No, it can't be destiny."

"How do you know?"

"Because I did it myself."

"Oh!"

"Yes, but you had told me you were going to walk home. Otherwise I would not for one instant—"

"Of course, of course; I know," he interrupted, almost bitterly. "Don't you suppose I realize that you saw me start for home? Nothing would have induced you to run the risk of being discovered. The thought of my finding you in my boat, asleep, would have been unbearable to you. I know that well enough. You consider me positively obnoxious."

To this she opposed not even a gesture, but loftily surveyed the stars.

"Am I not?"

Still no answer.

"Tell me."

"Tell you what?"

"Oh, nothing. Where's the use? You are so unapproachable you might as well be up there"—indicating the firmament at large—"alone on a star, or the moon; yes, better the moon, it must be so cold, so well suited—" He broke off suddenly. "No, no; I don't mean that! Down deep you're not like this. I won't believe it. I can't! Even if you did live up in a star, I'd never say die; I'd try to reach you; I'd bring you back to the throbbing earth and prove that the heart of it was in you." He paused, noticing the quicker motion of her breast. Her head was bent, her eyes downcast; her hands had joined each other closely in her lap. "When I saw you asleep I thought of this. I imagined you there above—immeasurably aloof. For an instant I longed to wake you, to bring you back. I was jealous of the stars. And yet I hadn't the heart to do it. Your sleep seemed sacred to me—your solitude."

She looked up slowly. "But now that I am awake, you—"

"No, never! What have I said? Forgive me. Perhaps it *is* too soon, but somehow I know as positively as

I know anything that you and I—" He was interrupted by circumstance. From close ahead came a sibilant sound of hissing.

A crescent of silver spray sparkled full in their course, out of which a familiar object, stern and forbidding, jutted high. It was the lightless beacon of the reef in mid-harbor. Lloyd, with a shove, steered wide.

"You would have run us into it!"

"Well, what then? I think it might have been a good plan. You need something like that to wake you into life—an accident, a crisis, danger."

"Do I?" She laughed for the first time. The lightless beacon had broken the spell. His eloquence could not offset the warning of that irritating spume. "The wind," she said, "is increasing."

"Very little."

"Look at that cloud."

He carelessly surveyed a whirl of gusty shadow to the northward. "Yes, I've been watching it. Angry, is it not?"

"Decidedly. How about reefing?"

"No."

"Would it not be safer?"

"Yes; but remember," he laughed, with apparent recklessness, "you need danger!"

For an instant her eyes had the timid, sensitive look, the stir of the breeze-troubled pennant at the mast-head. It was almost as though the pennant itself were a flickering light in them. She edged nearer to the stern rail.

The feel of the wind in his face roused Lloyd. He knew what was coming and was ready for it. His air of rashness was partly assumed. Every inch of him had the fling of piracy. He gripped the tiller hard and faced her. "I can't help it! You drive me wild! Merely being near you— But no, I'll wait. Only tell me,

was it you on the shore last night?' I know it was, but you *must* confess it. Say yes."

"Must?"

"Must!"

"And what if I don't?"

He pushed the tiller down, whereat the sail flapped idle in the wind, waiting. "Then we put about and sail to the open sea."

"No, no; you wouldn't!"

"You don't know me." He looked ahead, feigning an inflexible air, his face bold-bronze in cut and color.

The sail flapped loudly. One of Marion's hands was behind her. Strangely enough, she seemed little to fear his mediæval outlawry. Her wit could outplay his brigandage; it sparkled in her eyes, and under it a paradoxically feminine look of admiration for the brigand. The game excited her. It was now touch and go between capture and escape. Could she draw the yawl nearer without being seen? How in the world could she manage to slip aboard it and elude his vigilance? Pirate that he was, he would probably even dare to hold her. Oh, if only something would happen to divert his attention! While his face was averted her fingers worried the knot. They almost bled.

To him, though, when he glanced towards her, she appeared merely to be using an arm as a cushion for her back. "Decide," said he, grasping the tiller as though for a final shove.

"No, not now! Look, look!"

But Enoch was looking already. He laughed aloud. "Don't you suppose I see it?"

Down the bay rushed a line of spray like a million whip-lashes cracked from the depths. He sprang to the halyards and dropped the sail. The squall struck them full in the face. A moment of chaos, of blinding, tingling, drenching, biting torment; a moment of awe, of

unasked, unanswerable questions, unthinking breathlessness; a moment of seeing nothing but darkness pierced by the drunken, reeling mast, beating time to pandemonium! Then away raced the Furies out to sea.

Lloyd turned for a word to Marion. It died on his tongue. She was gone; once again inexorably she was gone. Had the Furies caught her from him? Had—

Heavily the gusty shadow whirled from the moon. At once he understood. There lay the yawl, scarce a rope's-throw astern, and its little, white, winglike mainsail was being raised for flight.

Quick as a flash he caught his halyards and hoisted the patched, gray canvas of *The Ruffian;* then to the tiller again, and he put about, bore down on the fugitive craft while yet her peak hung low. But the wing of *Ariel* was quicker still. It rose at once to its full spread. Enoch saw Marion spring to the tiller. Already he was abreast of the frightened yawl. The whole soul of the boy leaped up to plead for surrender. Similarly thus in childhood he had once cried out, in a dream, when Sleeping Beauty had melted into darkness; had cried out —and was awake. So again goes the golden dream, all in an instant. Oh, to grasp it and hold it fast!

"Miss Lee! Wait!" He saw her face turned towards him, saw her hair snaring the moon-rays to wreathe with light her oval face. And her eyes were mysteriously uncertain. And her hand on the tiller wavered. The little white sail hung tentative in the wind.

"Miss Lee"

"What?"

"Oh—Marion!"

Her palm trembled on the helm.

"Wait! Listen to me! You must!"

The tiller moved.

"Marion, I love you!"

Her hand pushed the helm half down.

"I love you!"

Down went the tiller, hard. The little white sail sprang alive. *Ariel*, dormant no longer, leaped into being; her gunwale dipped, every rope had become a nerve.

So went Marion, till at last the lines of her slender, Hellenic figure, solitary in the stern, and tranquil, were missing in the dark. So went *Ariel*, till only a track of whispering ripples told of her course.

Lloyd watched the play of the foam. Gradually a look suggesting its reflection—an artificial sparkle, the look of a trifler—stole into his eyes. Lighting his pipe, he lay out on a cushion, and with an air of easy idleness pleasantly bothered himself in trying to recall a popular tune.

At break of day, Slocum, anxious in spite of himself, sat on the deck of his light-ship, scowling at the dawn. Then along came a rakish, rough-looking sailboat out of the south and changed the scowl to a crusty smile.

"H'loa! That you, Enoch?"

"Yes."

"How be you?"

"Never better."

"Whar've you ben?"

"Wandering round."

"Squall strike you?"

"No."

"What! I'll be—"

"Oh yes, I forgot."

"Forgot! Crazy as ever! Wal, good luck."

Enoch waved an arm and glided homeward, humming gayly in the morning.

Said Slocum to himself: "He's happy as a pup!" By which conclusion the light-ship's master revealed to the

air the fact that a cuttle-fish is not, as a rule, conversant with the affairs of men.

For the first time in her life, Marion Lee, as she undressed that night, appeared to find fault with her antique mirror. Standing before it, her hair streaming about her shoulders, she passed a hand over the surface of the glass, as though it were possible to wipe away the mist of years.

XVI

The Letters that Crossed

THE words of his letter glowed. They flared, so to speak, from the last spark, which either reignites the blaze or expires unsuccessful.

"DEAR MISS LEE,—You cannot possibly understand how much this means to me. Night before last I sat on the shore alone—alone with failure—ignored. Then suddenly, like a spirit of hope, shaming all thoughts of failure, you came! I saw you touch my book to your lips. It was a reward greater than all the world's praise could have been—greater even than my own deep conviction that I had written well. How can I make you appreciate my happiness in that moment? How can I show you my heart as it was when we stood facing each other—kindred selves? Yes, we must be that. You alone have understood. Your voice—your lasting voice—says again—a thousand times again—to me, 'The book is yours and mine.'

"And yet you have failed me. Each time, without a word, you have gone away.

"Why—*why* should you not make good that first mystic promise? Yes, it seemed indeed a promise of some unimaginable benefit to me—to you—to both of us—*together*.

"I believe that with your eyes looking into mine as they did then, that with your voice repeating its clear encouragement, I could do great things—things worthy even of you.

"Last night, when your indifference, your maddening elusiveness, and finally your cruel flight, so tormented me, I said perhaps too much. I said I loved you. God knows if that is true. I feel as deeply as you must that love is never proved by one impetuous word. I may not love you,

Marion. Who can predict that one of us two shall ever truly love the other? But one thing is sure—certain as life and death—I need you now.

"And so I ask you, let us be companions, friends—open, sincere friends. You shall hear of my hopes and ambitions; you will be my muse, encouraging and uplifting me to higher endeavor always. You can do that—your eyes can, your voice can, your mind and spirit can—then do!

"I need you. I seem to exist only for your answer.

"ENOCH LLOYD."

It was Slocum who bore the missive. He had rowed to Mount Hope for a confab in the morning. Starting back, he skirted the shore.

A figure on land, at the same hour, slowly skirted the water. It was going in the opposite direction. Necessarily the two passed. And the second was likewise a messenger.

"How goes it, Timothy? Walkin' fer health?"

"Maybe. I suppose you're rowing for the same reason."

"Mebbe."

Thus they passed, each taciturnly guarding the secret of his mission. Never a moment of loquacity, a word of gossip. And only Dame Gossip could have saved the day! She might have revealed the fact that the verdict in Timothy's pocket was by no means founded on the plea in Slocum's. But no; if the dame speaks when she should be silent, she purses her lips when a word might right the wrong. Her tongue, whether wagging or tied, works mischief. Her silence is never golden. We know well enough the devil she wakes by talking; but what of the angel she lulls by keeping still?

No doubt an angel overslept himself that morning—a needed guardian—and the devil patrolled the shore.

Yet who in his sober senses could have expected a response so soon? Ah, but he had been waiting—impa-

tiently, desperately waiting—through what had seemed an interminable stretch of time.

"Dear Mr. Lloyd,—I trust you will not think me harsh, but owing to the episode of last evening, I must ask you not even to consider me an acquaintance. I mean—not even to call. Yours sincerely,

"Marion Lee."

Book III

I

The Top Floor Front

IN the foreground, behold a mountain of gingham swept by the breezes of a palm-leaf fan.

Madame Moreau was congratulating herself on being the possessor of an enterprising spirit. Yet why had she failed earlier in life to effect the remarkable coup which now so exhilarated her ambition? The upper stories had for years gone begging. How absurd to have been content with the ground floor! Quel bêtise! What is a restaurant, no matter how excellent the cuisine, no matter how popular the liberties of the place, compared with a nice little pension—hotel, she began to call it—where bachelors could come and live at a modest rate (one dollar a day and tout compris), just as of old in the rue Monsieur le Prince at half the price and twice the mischief?

Oh, why, thought she, do these inspirations dawdle so long outside one's head? Why can't they pop in and beatify youth, give it a chance when life is a fling and the heart hasn't yet such a mass of flesh to submerge it?

In casting about for an explanation of her protracted oversight, the worthy Mère Moreau naturally fell upon the imagined cause of all her troubles—namely Monsieur Moreau himself.

He sat at present beside her on the stoop of their metamorphosed restaurant. As usual, he seemed to be enjoying some inner joke, some secret, eternal jest, a whimsicality perhaps so abstract and indefinable as

to spring only from the comedy of human existence. Fat, young-looking, short, bright-eyed, Parisian, with waxed mustache and imperial, he suggested an overgrown gamin who, though come at last to his own and the responsibilities of half a century, could not disguise the gamin's heart with all his affected silences and scrupulosity of attire.

He sat looking out with affable irony northward over Washington Square. It was an evening early in September, hot, humid, oppressive, and the city boiled its inhabitants like a gigantic pot. Under a light near by, three or four ragamuffins were lazily pitching pennies towards the curb. One of them, waiting his turn, filliped a cent high in air, dropped it, and went on all-fours, monkey-like, in the gutter. Call the copper a sou, and there is Moreau the gamin, quick at the beginning of his greed in the shadows of Notre Dame. How pleasant is reminiscence! Pouf! He blew the smoke of his Caporal heavenward with satisfaction. Comparisons like his were never odious. He smiled at the trees and the benches. Here and there sat shop-girls, lolling their frowsy heads in the arms of factory-boys who droned love—love good, bad, and indifferent—into the ears at their lips, with unmentionable slang. Now and then, louder than the rest, a couple buzzed noisily, like flies on a window-pane. From others never a whisper, their public embrace defying even slang to express contentment.

Their moon was an arc-light!

Overhead the leafage, brown and wilting, hung motionless—a wide expanse of shadow streaked yellow by the glare. Far beyond, at the foot of the long avenue, whose dwellings now were empty and sombre with heavy hoardings over doors and windows, the great, white arch loomed ghostly, like the entrance to a street of tombs.

Monsieur Moreau seemed to prefer the nearer pros-

pect, the patches of tousled hair and faces leaning against them. How beautiful is love, and how amusing! Change their slang to the argot of the Quarter, and there buzzes Moreau again, with a girl of the quais and alleys. He could remember a bench in the Garden of the Luxembourg, could recall a small grisette, and how with a daring smirk he had edged towards her. "Holà, ma bich'!" says little Moreau, with the leer and language of the Boul'-Mich'. "Your contour, ma p'tite, is like that of a statuette there in the gallery. But that is so cold, and you—" He paused in the recollection. Madame of today had risen to her feet. He cocked an eye at the hugeous mound and smiled yet more ironically. Et bien, this is droll. The statuette—pouf! went a spiral of smoke in air—p'tite, indeed! Contemplating again the amorous benchers, his eyes, narrowing with satire, assumed a sort of sardonic sympathy. So will it be with these. Pity the arm that's a pillow in twenty years! Pauvre bras! What a burden! Pity the gourmet with a palate for pastry and a meal of dough. He glanced at madame the meal.

On the pavement before the stoop, her back to the squalid paradise of lovers, she stood planted, this mountain of white gingham, her ample summit serene in the breezes of the palm-leaf fan. Proudly she was viewing a long sign-board which in gilt capitals announced to ragamuffins and gods of the benches, "The Washington Hotel."

How bland she looked at fifty! This, at least, was to be approved. Quoth monsieur to himself, "Not so the grisette." Piff! what a fury when he had over-patronized the wine-shop or shown a liberal taste in the matter of statuettes! What a firebrand, what a madcap at the coming of Quatorze Juillet! Well, and why not? Her grandmother (hinted a slab at Mont Parnasse) had lived in Paris before Napoleon. Possibly the name of one's

grandmother could be guessed at with reasonable certainty. And probably madame of the Terror was by no means above a little deviltry herself. Hinted the shadows of the rue des Anglais, she had brought home one night in her pannier, after a holiday under the guillotine, something that was neither a pumpkin nor a squash! Queer that the descendant of a wolf should develop into a cow! How entertaining to trace the course of little destinies; to wonder concerning this and that; meanwhile to twirl one's mustache and smile with assumed vacuity at madame the cow!

But finally that harmless animal sat down. Overcome by the exertion of standing, she sank beside the seeming cause of all her troubles with a sigh. "Jules," said she, "why did you prevent me so long from thinking of this?"

Monsieur shook his head apologetically and shrugged his shoulders. What need to assert a prior claim? Let her take all the praise. He derived a peculiar satisfaction from harmless humbug. He was content that nothing should be genuine save the coins that came over his counter. And these, from a new customer, he was wont to bite with an absent-minded air, whereat he would start, as though shocked by the breach of politeness. "What need of this, m'sieur, in America? It is a detestable habit of my childhood."

In the present instance, no less apologetic, he turned to madame with a penitent look, as who should say, "I am indeed a burden to you." Always the humility of that glance had worked wonders. What else in the days and nights of the petit verre had saved him from this granddaughter of the Terror? And how much more efficacious when the tactic met but an imaginary grievance! Nowadays, in his regenerate state, wrongs, of course, could be only fancied. Nevertheless, this pleasant little habit of complaint would cling to madame for-

ever. Almost she would have blamed him for the irregularities of climate. To-night, however, her satisfaction could not easily be concealed.

"Well and good," said she—"well and good. Keep silence, if you like. We're at last, thanks to me, on the road to riches."

Monsieur edged nearer to obtain a share of the palm-leaf's breeze. Suavely he seemed to admit her superiority by a show of glances definable only—such was their fervor, such their eloquence—as gesticulations of the eyes.

Once again this ocular pantomime mollified madame. She consented not only to share the breeze, but to use the plural pronoun. Instead of "I," it was henceforth "we," merely as a matter of courtesy. Said she with a sigh of contentment, "We have done a fine thing. This is big. It is money-making. It is American! 'The Washington Hotel!'" (Another sigh from the submerged heart.) "And yet I shall keep the sign of the Caniche Blanc as a souvenir of our beginnings."

He inclined his head in silence. How sweet are the sentiments of woman!

"And whenever I look," she continued, tenderly, "at the great sign of the Washington Hotel, I shall think of the old one." For a moment she was dumb with emotion, then talkative again with importance. "Did you read about us in the paper to-day?"

Moreau pricked up his ears and scrutinized her. As usual, her bland face told him nothing. He smiled with a trace of bitterness. "You are making a joke."

Her head, big with a mass of black and oily hair, shook in ponderous denial. "Do I ever?"

"No, you couldn't."

"Couldn't!"

"I mean couldn't have the heart, my dear, when I am so impatient—"

"Impatient? Then listen." She stopped fanning and smoothed the plateau of gingham that formed her lap. "It is true. The gentleman of the top floor front showed me. I know every word. 'Another landmark,' it said, 'has vanished. The sign of the White Poodle, long familiar to Bohemians, has disappeared from the little restaurant of that name on the south side of Washington Square. The success of the proprietors has enabled them to lease the entire building for hotel purposes.'"

Madame had mouthed the journalistic sentences as best she could. They were scarcely conducive to oratorical effect, yet on the emotions of Monsieur Moreau they beat like splendid periods. "Bravo!" cried he. "Bravissimo!"

Madame, resuming the palm-leaf, slowly waved it to and fro with queenly pride.

The eyes of her consort fairly glistened. "The top floor front," said he, "will have a better opinion of us."

The queen frowned in slight displeasure. "No, he thinks we've been unwise; he says it is too bad."

"What does he know about us?"

"Nothing, of course."

"He's from out of town, isn't he?"

"Yes, I think."

Monsieur assumed an air of consultation. It was so amusing to ask her advice in a matter of importance. "Do you not consider that after such a notice we must raise the price of every one, and especially the top floor front?"

Again the breeze died to a calm. Madame inspected her fan gravely. "He seems poor."

"So? Well, what does he do?"

"I don't know. He is in his room all day, and the gas burns till morning."

"Does he work?"

"How do I know? His door is shut, always."

"Yes, but you arrange his room."

"The desk is locked, and the chiffonnier. He is a mystery."

"So? Well, well, then let us wait. Where there's a mystery, one must crawl." Monsieur said it craftily, foreseeing her opposition where he wished it.

"No," she objected, "I'm not sure. Perhaps we should make him pay more. Yes, on the whole, I think so. Take my advice, we'd better."

He twirled the points of his mustache to cover a smile. "Of course you know best, chérie, but I suspect the top floor front. I believe he is a writer of something secret. How can I tell what? Impossible! And yet I have heard his typewriting-machine go *clickety-tap*, *click-tap*, day and night ever since he has been here."

Madame turned with a frown, vexed by his rivalry in spying.

"Ah, the key-hole!" said she, witheringly, in scorn.

He appeared grieved. "Oh, ma chère—"

"Well, and what if he is a writer?"

"Nothing, only writers cannot as a rule pay—"

"Pooh! How do you know? Besides, we must raise the prices of every one. If he don't pay, let him go to the Bowery."

Monsieur nodded. "I believe you are right, bébé, as usual." He patted her fat hand. (Why not? In a year she would be saying, "I told you so. How much wiser it was to raise prices! But for me you would be a pauper!") He rested a hand on her knee. (Pourquoi non? So sits the Sultan, they say, with one hand resting on a cushion.) "We've taken a long leap," said he, "from the days and the ways of St. Germain." He glanced up cautiously at an open window of the top story, then lowered his voice to a whisper. "But, hélas, there are shady characters everywhere!"

Madame started. "You believe that?"

He shrugged.

"No, no," she objected. "Think of his eyes! Nom de Dieu! do you call them shady?"

Monsieur smiled indulgently. Quoth he to himself, "How soft are the hearts of women!"

"Why, why," she complained, "are you always suspecting people?"

"Because there are always people to be suspected."

Madame laid a pudgy hand on his arm. "S-sh! See here!"

Following her stare, he beheld a stranger approaching. Some one who had just turned a near corner advanced in the light of the electric moon. Presently the some one—a small, nervous individual—stopped before the restaurant, and, with head jerked back, inspected the new sign-board.

In a moment he lowered his glance. "Was this at one time the Caniche Blanc?"

Monsieur rose and politely bowed, the bow being eloquent of hospitality and affirmation. As for madame, she sat a moment longer, struck dumb with curiosity. Something so eager sharpened the visitor's look, something so impatient.

"Is there a gentleman stopping here by the name of Mr. Enoch Lloyd?"

Mère Moreau stood up heavily. "Mr. Lloyd?" she echoed, nudging her husband.

"Yes, Mr. Lloyd."

She looked at Jules questioningly.

Jules gazed up at the arc moon. "When one has so many boarders," he murmured, "it is difficult—" He paused. "Has monsieur a friend by that name?"

The stranger inspected the pair with a puzzled expression. Their hesitation perplexed him. Why in the world, he wondered, should so simple an inquiry fluster

their silly brains. Much put out, he pitched his voice to a higher key. "I want to know if Mr. Lloyd lives here."

Madame looked grave. She felt as if his eyes, keen behind rimless glasses, were boring, gimlet-like, even to her wadded bones. Feared she in her marrow, "This man is a detective. Alas for the top floor front!"

But Jules—Jules the sometime gamin, long ago quick at smelling a rat—knew better. Detectives don't interrogate so boldly. Jamais! Beware of their ears and their eyes and even their noses; but only when they pay for your wine beware of their tongues—and your own!

"I believe your friend," said monsieur, hesitating on the implication of intimacy, to see if so much as an eyelash fluttered assent—"I believe your friend is the occupant of the top floor front."

Madame went breathless with suspense. But the stranger only glanced upward and remarked that, as a light was burning in the aforementioned chamber, Mr. Lloyd might be within.

"Perhaps," admitted madame.

"And perhaps not," said monsieur, smiling.

"I'll go up and see," announced the friend of the Mystery, setting foot on the lowest step.

"Mais, non!" prohibited madame, rumpling with excitement; after which, to have passed the mountain of gingham would have required the daring of an Alpine guide.

"What in the world—" expostulated the stranger.

"You will please," demanded Mère Moreau, "send up your name."

"But, I—"

"No matter! The gentleman has given strict orders."

"Strict orders! What do you mean?"

"Just that."

"Yes, yes," put in Jules, with a twirl of his waxed glory—"just that."

"But—"

"On est prié," began monsieur, airily; "de—"

"The deuce! Talk English, will you?"

"C'est défendu," observed madame; "de—"

She was interrupted by a new move on the part of the nervous visitor. Stepping back almost to the curb, he looked up again at the top floor front.

"Lloyd!"

No reply.

The pair of Moreaus, taken aback, twisted their necks for a glance at the open window. No one appeared. Only a slant of garish rays, evidently cast by some patent gas-mantle in a corner of the room, betrayed an occupant.

"Enoch Lloyd!"

Still no answer, no face.

Monsieur and madame looked at each other.

"Lloyd, old man!"

Was it the voice or the words that told—the mere call or the term of intimacy? Be this as it may, the last attempt proved more successful. The window was darkened by a man who rested his hands on the sill, and, thrusting forth head and shoulders under the sash, looked down to inspect his visitor. "Who is it?" (This in a testy voice, unfamiliarly hard and fretful.)

"It's I, Cuthbert Morton."

A moment's hesitation; then from the window a greeting unwontedly half-hearted. "Halloa, Cutty. Come up."

Cuthbert skirted the white mountain. The palm-leaf went all a-flurry again in great commotion. Monsieur Moreau turned his face to the breeze and smiled at nothing. For them the mystery was mystery still.

Also for Cuthbert Morton. He was standing now in

a dark, narrow, and somewhat malodorous hallway on the top floor. Enoch's door had not yet been opened. Why? How peculiar it all seemed! How utterly out of keeping with the open and easy nature of his friend! Evidently Lloyd was moving about the room, wherefrom in a moment there came a low rustle as of silk. Morton started, his eyes narrowing doubtfully. But no, he must be wrong. Suspicions were ungrounded. Second thoughts dispelled them—thoughts of the days at college, and the nights. Memory flashed back and reminded him that, despite the amusement of a large majority, Enoch, owing perhaps to some fundamental refinement, some pristine clarity of nature, had kept himself unsmirched. Moreover, the rustling, as Lloyd apparently increased his haste, sounded harsher, more crinkly, suggestive rather of paper than of silk. Ah, of course. Lloyd was only gathering up his manuscript. Yet why on earth—

Suddenly the key turned, the door opened, and the subject of Morton's conjectures welcomed him with apologies. "Come in, Cutty. Forgive me, but things were so mixed up that I had to straighten them out."

Morton, entering, obtained an impression of the room at first glance, or, to be more accurate, by a succession of quick and pointed glances, for the darting of which his eyes and the trembling glasses, almost invisible on the knifelike bridge of his nose, appeared to be singularly well adapted.

The room, connecting with a narrow bedchamber, suggested a loft or storage attic, recently converted by the enterprising Moreaus. The walls and ceiling had been so lately repaired that here and there the plaster was perspiring in large splotches that smelled of damp. From one corner of a writing-table near the window a droplight, garish with an incandescent mantle, tinted the surface a sickly green. On the desk a typewriting-machine,

covered now by its black metal case, offered the only evidence of work. As for furniture, there was little; as for decoration, almost none. Over one of the splotches where the dampness oozed hung a daub in oils, smeared, no doubt, by some debtor of the Moreaus, a beginner at failure in the Quarter long ago. It pictured a woman in evening dress who would have seemed more modest nude. Opposite this hung another attempt, not quite so unsuccessful. It was that of a bacchante, tasting a grape in the woodland. The light of the patent gas-burner turned her body green. At one side of the room an empty grate, rusty and sunken, added to the cheerlessness of the interior.

This was the impression of an instant while Cuthbert greeted Lloyd. "Your manuscript, I suppose, was all over the place."

"Yes, reams."

"Good! I knew you'd stick to it."

Enoch turned to his desk for a cigarette, the lighting of which bridged a gap that otherwise might have yawned wide for an answer. "Sit down. Here, have one." He held out a leather case. "I was going to drop you a line soon. How did you find my address?"

"Merely a piece of luck—for me, if not for you." He paused.

"Of course, for me," said Enoch; "but how?"

"Oh, simply enough. You've heard of Charlie Parker, the dramatist? Well, he's taken the room below. He told me there was a slave named Enoch Lloyd on top of him, who clicked the night away with a typewriting-machine and ruined his slumber. Ergo, here I am."

Lloyd seated himself in his writing-chair. Cuthbert, pulling nearer to the table, struck a match. "Be sure your sins will find you out." Enoch winced, and Cuthbert forgot the match in wondering wherefore. He burned his finger. "Dash it!" He scratched another.

"What sins?" queried Lloyd, with a yawn.

Morton lighted the cigarette without lowering his glance. "Those against friendship, of course. How do you mean?" He jerked the match out. "What's up?"

"Who said anything was 'up'?"

"No one," admitted Cuthbert, tapping on the writing-table with nervous fingers. "But you must confess it's shabby treatment. Here you are in town for two whole months and not a single—"

Enoch stopped short in stretching. "Who says I've been in town two months?"

"Old Mr. Lee supposed so."

"Mr. Lee!"

"Yes. Why do you start?"

"What did he say?"

"Nothing much. He merely happened to mention that you suddenly left Bristol without a word of warning."

Enoch surveyed the wall abstractedly, as though he had forgotten the other's presence.

Cuthbert made a gesture of impatience. "How did you happen to come here?"

"I heard O'Brien mention the place. He hangs about the borders of Bohemia, you know. But tell me, are they in town?"

"Who? The O'Briens?"

"No, I mean— Never mind."

Cuthbert leaned forward over the desk. "Lord, man! You look as if you'd stayed up every night for a week. What on earth have you been doing?"

Lloyd shook his head wearily. "That," said he, "is what I'd like to know."

"The dickens! Have you begun to sow them at last?"

"To sow what?"

"Wild oats. I always say it's more dangerous late than early."

Enoch passed a hand across his forehead. "No, not yet. It might have been better if I had."

"Oh, hang it!" ejaculated Cuthbert. "Speak out!"

But the Mystery, smiling at the sombre case of his typewriter, laughed idly. "There's nothing to say, nothing whatever! I'm done up, that's all. Overwork, I suppose." He bit his lip in spite of himself.

"Ah, that's it. I began to fear something had gone wrong."

Lloyd glanced up furtively. "Who said so?"

"Nobody; and yet it looks that way." Morton scrutinized his friend with inquisitive shrewdness. Nevertheless, the curiosity of the little critic, though a genuine fault, was mingled in this instance with an unselfishness akin to the solicitude of an elder brother. Long ago his narrow, regular nature had constituted itself monitor over the pliant and volatile temperament of Lloyd. Like dies of base but deep-cut metal, certain characters make their impress on malleable gold. It seemed the part of Morton, keen, incisive, and ready-cast, thus to play the die to Enoch, and he did it, although at the risk of being charged with prying. Though the motives of Cuthbert, like those of many self-elected wardens of integrity, had not yet passed the incipient stages of generous concern, he felt a sincere and growing interest in his friend. His analytical insight into men and motives had brought him a premonition of that which Stephen Lee had obtained by experience and a broader sympathy with human nature. He knew that failure degrades some characters as inevitably as success spoils others.

Actuated by this conclusion, Cuthbert hung to the scent. With a peculiar mingling of inquisitiveness and loyalty—much as a woman mixes motives—he could no more refrain from playing the catechist than could Lloyd, under the circumstances, throw off the rôle of

mute. Naturally the conversation took a sharper turn. Naturally one pursued too fast and the other was brought to bay. Thus:

"Why all this mystery as to your whereabouts—this apprehension about visitors?"

"Mystery! Apprehension! What do you mean?"

"The people down-stairs say you've given strict orders—"

"The fools!"

"Then why do they—"

Lloyd filliped his cigarette out through the window. Immediately he lit a second. "Of course I told them not to let any one up without his name. Lord, man! Who wants to be disturbed at his work by every Tom, Dick, and Harry who happens along? You should understand that well enough."

Morton readjusted his glasses—not to see, but to think more closely—and said nothing.

"Hang it!" Enoch ejaculated. "What are you deducing now? You should take a position in Mulberry Street or Scotland Yard."

Cuthbert laughed bitterly. He had expected the taunt. It was a constantly repeated echo from the friends of his earliest boyhood. Yet his logical mind persisted now, as usual, with a precision as keenly delicate as that of the needle in a sewing-machine. This was the way of his brain: always to stitch, and stitch industriously, scraps of information, scraps of observation, scraps of opinion, into a precise pattern of life.

Whatever convictions it pieced together now were hidden behind his glasses. "Am I in the class," he said, with a forced smile, "of Tom, Dick, and Harry?" Then hastily, to preclude the possibility of an answer: "Well," he allowed, "perhaps it is natural enough, but I can't help noticing the change in you. Think how different you were when at work on *The Greatest Good*. You used

to want us around; liked to declaim the thing as it went along; left your manuscript all over the place; didn't give a continental for privacy, whereas now—" He paused, narrowing his eyes, knitting his brows. "Now how different! Not a word about your work! Two months in town and never a line to any of us. Blame it! You seem out of place in town. Think of the country, your adored Mount Hope and—"

"Oh, drop all that!" interrupted Enoch, with sudden anger. Then, controlling himself: "I say, Cutty," he requested, almost plaintively, "let's change the subject. I know you mean well, but you're always borrowing trouble. For a man with no imagination, you do invent the greatest lot of nonsense. The truth is I'm growing more mature, less high-flown and harum-scarum. I've settled down to real work. I've come here to be alone and accomplish something. Where once I was all in the air, I am now on earth. Where I used to ignore first principles, I'm now getting down to them. You are the very one to see the wisdom of my course."

Cuthbert pursed his lips. "That depends—" he began.

"On nothing," was the quick rejoinder. "I have asked you to drop the subject. I've said all I'm going to, and that's the end of it."

Morton, twirling his cigarette about, squinted at the spark. "Well, all right." He appeared to surrender. Then, after a moment of silence: "I see," he observed, in easy, conversational tones, "you've taken to a typewriter."

"Yes; more speed."

"You've been hurrying the work along, then?"

"Yes."

"Good! No more depending on mere mood—the divine afflatus business."

"No." Lloyd glanced at the shrewd but sincere face

of his friend with a look of suddenly awakened interest. A noticeable comparison had occurred to him. He heard another voice, hard with similar sentiments, and yet how different at heart were Matthew Steele and Cuthbert Morton! They stood for the highest and the lowest, he thought, in the utilitarian system. Each had a hand in the building of Babel. To compare the two was to contrast the giant, Commercialism, blindly grubbing for a hard foundation, with Science, the architect, calmly planning their tower to the skies. And where was religion, and where was poetry, and where all the Lloyds of life—the men who dream? A realization that he, Enoch Lloyd, a man capable of drawing these distinctions, of standing aloof, and, thanks to the soul within him, transcending their highest aim, a realization that he, Enoch Lloyd, was no longer in a position to despise the sightless giant, brought him a moment of despair. True, he was not grubbing for mere wealth, yet that which he sought, if obtained, would bestow, he admitted, far less benefit on others than a fortune brings to the circle of its maker. This fact, and with it a quick glimpse of the whole situation, deepened his depression. Why had Cuthbert come to unnerve him? Why must his privacy be invaded? Morton's glance was a stab. The keen points of light reflected on his glasses seemed to penetrate through every secret. When he frowned the glasses trembled, when they trembled the lights danced, till Enoch, somehow fascinated, somehow unwilling to lower his gaze, was beside himself with desperate vexation. "Why did you come?" he demanded, suddenly.

Cuthbert said nothing.

"Are you always so interested in other people's business?"

A start, but still not a word of answer.

Enoch's temper took fire. A turbulent feeling of offence, too unfounded and exaggerated to be termed

indignation, burned within him. The muteness of Cuthbert had become unbearable. Why did he not speak? Better his prying questions than so insinuating a silence.

It was, in fact, this silence—Morton's last thrust—that brought his quarry to bay.

Lloyd sprang up and stood over him with angry eyes. "Damn it! Can you ever leave me alone?"

Cuthbert's look went hard and cynical. Even curiosity so peculiarly blended with friendship could endure no more. His glasses flashed. Without a word he went to the door. There, turning, "I can," he replied, incisively—"and will!" He laughed a chirrupy laugh, suggesting the twitter of an English sparrow. "Goodbye, *Angel;*" whereafter in a second the door was closed.

Lloyd started back as though struck. The sarcasm with which his old sobriquet had been tossed at him tingled in his ears. His face paled; he bit his lip. What cause— He hesitated. What reason had Cuthbert—he cast a sidelong glance at the open window—to taunt an old friend? But still—he turned and crossed the room—Morton had always meant well! He rested a hand on the sill—both hands. Morton had always—He thrust his head out and looked down. "Cutty! Cutty!"

He was too late. The small, wiry figure, without the slightest show of hesitancy, turned a corner and was gone.

There sat the Moreaus peering up. A couple of mischievous ragamuffins, having heard the voice, answered it with jeers and catcalls. Enoch surveyed the square. On the benches, beyond the immediate circle of light, shapes were caressing shapes. Here and there a dress, once white, or a patch of yellow hair, lent semblance of life to the shadows. Two or three of the nearest had heard the call. Enoch saw several upturned faces —several colorless, upturned faces. They stared with

a sort of resentful curiosity. So, no doubt, would the comfortable dead look up should their peace be suddenly broken.

The figure of a small woman, unescorted, was approaching with a slightly hesitant step. Towards one and another of the couples she turned her head with an air of scrutiny, and her features were closely veiled.

Enoch's imagination, to-night unhealthy with fatigue, received a morbid impression.

This woman walked among the lifeless, and yet was herself a virile spirit who had come, as it were, to inspect them and make sure of their condition. Her the lethargy never would claim. She conferred it upon others. Thus, no doubt, do the daughters of Death—the Seven Sins—keep watch against resurrection.

Naturally, the lady wore a veil. Naturally, her steps were cautious.

Lloyd watched her. So real was the phantasm just conceived that he frowned at the veil and even shuddered. Thereupon, as chance would have it, she looked up. He saw the shadowy film that hid her face turned fully towards him. With a quick, unreasoning impulse he lowered the window-shade, and that, he thought, was the end of it. The end of what? He smiled as at an absurdity. All he needed was a little sleep to relieve the tension. But not now—not yet. The thing could be finished this very night. Locking the door against intruders, he lifted the case from his typewriter, seated himself, and fell to work, safely screened, he believed, by the yellow shade from upturned faces.

In a moment he forgot the One of Seven, and gave not so much as a nook of his brain to the fear that a screen might suggest a secret. Nor yet did he consider at all an interesting study in optics.

Not so the One. Raising her veil, she stared at the lighted window. Why had he so abruptly drawn the

shade? The woman waited, wondering; her brows contracted in perplexity.

Again he appeared, or, rather, his presence was made manifest by the disregarded necromancy of optics.

Suddenly on the shade the image of a profile bending close to a pair of hands and a pair of forearms was cast in sharp silhouette by the light beside him. The hands were dancing quickly up and down, the fingers jigging at a lively rate, as if on the key-board of a piano.

Thus, no doubt, is a man's dark side—the unreal but telltale shadow—revealed to the One of Seven.

The woman took to a bench and pondered.

She, however, was not alone in puzzling over the riddle. That which optics did for her, acoustics did for others. Monsieur Moreau, up on the stoop, looked at madame and smiled. "There it goes!" he nodded. "There it goes again—*clickety-tap, click-tap-tappety!*"

Mère Moreau sighed heavily. "I wish there were more like him. I'm sure he's all right. Now if the little one would only follow this honest pursuit—"

"Notre p'tite!" interjected Moreau. "Piff! my dear; impossible!"

"If she would only do that," complained madame, "instead of borrowing from us and—how do you say it? —hoodwinking all the others!"

Monsieur daintily fingered his facial adornment and smiled with covert pride. "Yes, yes, my heart; and yet how dull to be always *clickety-tapping!*"

II

The Custodian of Night

AN hour earlier in the evening now dragging so oppressively to a close the servile dachshund known as "p'tit Bonhomme," lying at his mistress's feet in the respectable "cocoon of the chrysalis," had ventured to yap a plaintive remonstrance. Such is the inconsistency of dogs. Here was a nose positively made to be clutched and wrung, and yet so sensitive as to shrink from the hand that squeezed it. Such, too, is the inconsistency of woman. Here were diminutive fingers—possibly sorrowed Bonhomme—fingers made to smooth and stroke the muzzle in question, and yet so cruel as to delight in torture. Delight? Yes, they fairly revelled in the clinch. Yelp as he would, nothing could restrain her. She only persisted further. "Little fool!" she laughed. "Little baby! Be quiet and I'll stop. It's the only way."

As though he understood, p'tit Bonhomme now cringingly resigned himself to the torment. Instantly she released him. "There, now you're free to crawl away and hide."

More amenable still to this last advice, he took refuge beneath her sofa. His mistress, comfortably seated thereon, and looking down as if at her victim through the upholstery, proceeded to Frenchify the wisdom of Sparta. "P'tit misérable," said she, frowning at the Oriental covering, "a word in your floppety ear. Never make a fuss. It is all in vain. Never ki-yi at the fin-

gers of Destiny. Just bite your tongue till they are tired of the fun, and they will be! That's the trick of your mistress—eh, mon cher? And it's not so bad—it's not so bad! There's now and then a titbit in the fingers." Picking up a newspaper, she held it to the lamp. "This, for instance. Here's a titbit, my dear Bonhomme, and this is why I hurt you. Sheer delight, you know. What are you here for, eh? I'll tell you why Monsieur Bonhomme is here. He's here to bear the moods of his little fate, like any good Christian." Crossing herself with a devout forefinger, Céleste read the delectable paragraph, twittering it aloud:

"'Another landmark has vanished. The sign of the White Poodle, long familiar to Bohemians, has disappeared from the little restaurant of that name on the south side of Washington Square. The success of the proprietors'" [here Céleste fairly trilled the tidings] "'has enabled them to lease the entire building for hotel purposes.'"

Springing up in excitement, she tossed aside the paper. "At last they've done it! I must go and congratulate them." She paused, with a petulant frown. To dress and go out on such a night was undoubtedly to swelter. How comfortable she felt, clad only in this diaphanous garment! Entering her alcove bedroom, she paused before a long cheval-glass. The wrapper, a silken kimono, soft, and subtly green, with the tinge of a moonlit wave, shimmered uncertainly in the light of the alcove candle.

Her eyes glowed. What daring bizarrerie in the color! It seemed appropriate that her dress should suggest a meaning, always an uninterpretable meaning, a symbol of something, an enigma, nebulous moonlight or a moonlit wave, an impression haunting the eyes, the body, the mind, the soul; something transmundane, illusive, ungraspable—ever to be sought!

She smiled. How little she was, yet how voluptu-

ously rounded; how piquant, yet how alluring to the gaze!

Catching together the edges of her garment, she posed and studied the effect. Evidently delighted by her suggestiveness in so graceful yet obvious a concealment, she laughed aloud. Somehow the posture and gossamer fabric softened the mere physical—the sheer sensual—beauty that a bolder display might instantly have revealed. Somehow the filmy folds appeared to endue her form with mystery; to invest it with a part of the psychal influence lurking in the shadow of her eyes and hair.

Nodding approval, she wrapped the tissue even closer, and, lightly clasping her hands before her, seemed loath to leave. Above the gleam of her eyes, and downward beside them, hung her hair and the shadows of her hair—deep, diffusive, mysterious. Diffusive? Yes, yes. This, she told herself, was the main effect. At last she could name it. She diffused shadows. She might have been called "The Custodian of Night." She had risen from the pale-green deep and her body had caught its tinge; but her hair and her eyes, unchangeable, umbral, ever nocturnal, spread abroad the dark. How inscrutable she was; how chimerical! Yes, chimerical. The word pleased her. La Chimère, she might well call herself, since men pursued but never could obtain. Voluptas veiled was La Chimère, and La Chimère, with eternal mockery in the depths of her eyes, was p'tite Céleste.

Subtly she appreciated the effect of her zephyr garment, both because it concealed and yet suggested the vital intensity of her body. Moreover, the airy tissue prettily symbolized her policy. Instinct with a spirit of seduction, did she not similarly soften all the realities of life? How graceful she was in shrouding the definite outlines, the actualities, the bold, unmistakable nudities—how wise! Nor was it all expediency that drew the veil. Anything bare, anything stark, anything outright—any-

thing, in short, that was frankly naked, seemed worthy only of the vulgar, the canaille, she presumptuously sneered. Incapable of recognizing innocence in candor, her veneer of delicacy conformed in a way to the scrupulosity of prudes.

Affectedly particular in this direction, she was, however, no stickler for modesty in the way of obtaining funds. And funds at the present moment were surely the prerequisites of existence. Either they must be forthcoming, or some of her precious little possessions would have to go.

She turned from the mirror and glanced between the portières at the ormolu clock, not to see the time, but to deplore the possibility of a sacrifice. If nothing turned up very soon, poor Cupid of the forge would be transported to a place where they don't wind clocks—they have so many! and hearts are not wanted—so many break there! Alas! his little arm would be paralyzed—Love's labor lost—at the sign of the Three Brass Balls. And then old Time would step to the anvil and fall to coining dollars! They welcome Time at the Three Brass Balls. He is their master-workman.

Ugh! it must not be! Céleste dressed hurriedly, smiled at the farrier's figure, waved good-bye to Bonhomme, and, braving the heat, was before very long inspecting another figure, also at work, mysterious as though at the labor of life—a figure silhouetted on a window-shade.

Succumbing to the thrall, its mystery, its meaning, as she had not succumbed even to the shadows in her looking-glass, Céleste sank to a bench in the square beneath and considered the affairs of her destiny. Evidently this profound contemplation ended as it had begun—with a question. Rising suddenly, all on edge with impatient wonder, she calmed herself to a casual step and approached the abode of the silhouette.

On the stoop sat a mountain of white gingham and a bright-eyed mouse.

"I thought," said Céleste, "you might be taking your ease on one of the benches." She glanced up approvingly at the sign-board. "Well, so you've done it!"

They surveyed her after the widely different manners of a mouse and a mountain. The bright eyes darted up to her own furtively; the gingham scarcely rustled.

"You've done it at last," she gayly pursued, ignoring their silence. "'The Washington Hotel!' Excellent! We're coming up in the world. My congratulations, monsieur le proprietaire; but, of course, to you, madame, belongs the praise. You are so progressive! You hate a rut as much as I do. Oh, how we both like a change now and then! I suppose it's the blood of our guillotining ancestor. She wanted a change herself. Yes, you are a worthy descendant." And Céleste courtesied prettily to madame.

The mountain of gingham stirred. Flattery alone could have moved it. But the mouse squirmed. It was all very well to pay these preposterous compliments one's self; it was quite a different matter to tolerate them from another. Whenever madame of the Terror was thrown in his teeth he began to wish that his own ancestor had been something more than a vagabond rhymster.

Céleste smiled and proceeded to palliate him. "Did it ever occur to you that perhaps the story of Phillipot is all wrong? You are so comme il faut. Do you know, I've been thinking that perhaps *your* ancestor was none other than the noble gentleman whose head madame of the Terror carried home in a basket!"

At this astounding suggestion the present madame laughed aloud. What a thrust! Yes, it was very probable.

Monsieur, however, ignoring her mirth, smiled proudly. Of course she could not appreciate the meaning of that

possibility. He was quite willing to have it that *her* progenitor had made way with the head of *his;* the thing proved him of a stock so far superior. "I believe it!" he exclaimed. "It must be so. Now I know why at heart I am aristocratic."

Thus the vanity of both was tickled by Céleste.

Monsieur, however, was clever enough to understand the tricks of cajolery. Between him and Céleste it was diamond cut diamond. "What is your name this week?" he inquired, by way of a pleasantry.

Céleste shrugged with a smile. "I've almost forgotten."

"Ah! so many, I suppose."

"No, not that; but it's such a long time since I took a new one."

"What! Is the confidence woman reformed?"

"Yes, there's no one to confide in."

"Pauvre p'tite! Oh, pardon, I forgot you were an American. The once-a-poor-model-of-the-Quarter story is out of date."

Céleste nodded.

"Hum-m-m!" rumbled the white mountain.

"Yes, indeed, hum-m-m," admitted monsieur, with a covert wink at Céleste. "We cannot countenance her at all."

Madame turned on him heavily. "Who said so? Did I?"

"No, that's true. Forgive me. You did not, my dear." He twirled a smile away. "But then—"

"Pooh! I see no reason why we shouldn't. We've made money. It is only right."

Céleste sighed gratefully. "You are too good to me —much too good. I shall never forget it."

"How much do you want?" inquired monsieur, mentally imagining the sum of his wealth written across the great arc moon.

"What you can spare," was the humble murmur. "I'll never ask you again—but see." She opened a tiny silver chatelaine bag at her side. The jaws of it yawned empty.

Monsieur looked pityingly at the bag. "Ho, poor thing, it's hungry. But," he declared, with an aggressive glance at madame, "I think a couple of hundred would be excessive."

The palm-leaf fan flapped quick with contrariety. "Do you? Now, now, now! Why so? This is the last time."

"True, but still—" He made a mental calculation in subtraction on the globe of the electric moon. A comfortable balance remained. "But still—"

"Bah! You always were a miser. Who has made the money, I'd like to know?"

"There can't be a question, my dear."

"Well, then, who has a right to spend it?"

"Reasonable, chérie; very reasonable!"

"Toujours! Then give it to her."

Monsieur rose, obedient as ever. Winking and smiling from behind the mountain at the little beneficiary, he backed into the house.

Céleste seated herself on the steps and surveyed the paradise of shop-girls. By twos and fours the lovers had begun to leave. With a straightening of hats and taking of arms, with giggles and whistles as signals of reminder to their friends who lagged on the benches, they slouched away. Céleste, watching them, affected a tender pity. "Poor little souls! There giggles Céleste ten years ago in the shadows of Notre Dame."

The fan stopped in surprise. "I like to hear you say that. It is not proud."

Céleste looked up penitently. "Your kindness makes me ashamed of pretence."

"Chère p'tite."

"But, after all, I never did loll my head on—"

"No, no, my dear; jamais—very unlike the rest."

"I wish they would go, so we could be quite alone."

"Yes."

"But what is the constant tapping overhead?"

"That is the top floor front."

"It sounds like typewriting. Some struggling woman, I suppose."

"No, we take only bachelors. It's a man—Mr. Enoch Lloyd."

Céleste sat motionless. "Oh, a man."

"Yes, but s-sh! it's very queer!"

"Queer?"

Madame wrinkled up her brows. "A mystery! We cannot tell. He works and works. We must raise his price; the gas bill is too much."

"Why is that strange? So many people—"

"Ah, but he never says—never talks about it. He hides everything. He fears visitors. We cannot make out." She paused; they both looked up. The tapping had suddenly stopped. In a moment the light went out. "Hum!" said madame, resuming her fan. "He has never before gone to bed so early."

"No? Well, he is probably worn out, poor fellow. I wonder what has become of monsieur le propriétaire."

"Poof! That, at least, is not a mystery. The miser has forgotten the combination. But the thing is plain. The numbers he set it for are our three ages—his, yours, mine. I suggested that. He always forgets it when I want money from the safe. Here he comes."

"S-sh! That is not his step."

"Not? Then perhaps it's the top floor front." They kept silence. Down came the Mystery between them, while Céleste, edging to one side, raised a hand to her face carelessly, as though to arrange her veil. He walked away quickly and turned a corner.

"Hum-m-m!" said madame, pursing her lips. "He had a package in his hand."

"Urgent work, I suppose. But where *is* the miser? Shall I go in and suggest blowing open the safe?"

"Ha! Yes, that joke will make him angry."

Céleste went. Meeting Moreau, she laid finger to lips and drew him back to the office, a dark cubby-hole, where were kept the books of the establishment, and on a high shelf numerous money-making bottles of cordials and liqueurs. "Have you a key to the top floor front? Quick, tell me."

"Yes, yes, I have; but why?"

"Give it to me."

Mastered by her impatience, he took a pass-key from his desk drawer. "This opens them all."

"Good! Now quick, come up and wait on the floor below. She may grow impatient. If she appears, talk her off, but warn me."

"Warn you? How? How?" His eyes glistened with bewildered excitement.

"Oh, hum an air—the 'Boulanger March,' anything!"

"Yes." (They were now at the foot of the top flight.) "Yes, yes." Monsieur caught her by the arm. "But suppose *he* comes!"

"Then carelessly hum another—the 'Marseillaise.' Leave the rest to me. I can escape to your bedroom." She flew up-stairs.

"Pardieu!" exclaimed Moreau to himself. "Now we shall know. Now or never! Dear me, how clever she is, p'tite Céleste—how quick, how vivacious!"

In a twinkling Céleste had key in lock and door open. The light flooded in from the hall. Her eyes darted about the room. So keen was her power of observation that after that first glance she could probably have left the room and catalogued all its visible contents. But the invisible meant far more.

She glided in, drawing the door ajar behind her. Through the crack came a ray of light, and through the window-shade a faint glimmer from the street, but this, cast upward to the ceiling, lent no assistance. She must open the door wide. No, it swung outward. If the worst came to the worst and Boulanger failed her, she would have to pull the knob in a hurry and draw the bolt. This she decided instinctively, as a fox decides upon cover, not by thought. And all the time she was looking for the invisible. First she slipped to the bedroom, leaving the obvious till the last. Standing on tiptoe at the tall chiffonnier, she passed a hand over the top. Everything had to be done by feeling, by the touch of her perceptive, antennæ-like fingers. Meanwhile at short intervals she held her breath, listening. From the chiffonnier she felt her way to the bed, and thence to a large wardrobe. This she opened noiselessly. She reached up. Dexterous and nimble as a pickpocket's, her hands went through the clothes. They contained nothing of interest—a pipe, a handful of matches. Not a paper, not a key. She glided back to the adjoining room. Against the opaque window-shade the typewriter stood black and heavy. Otherwise the top of the desk was bare. She laid a hand on the knob of the top drawer, then hesitated. Up from below came a catch from the "Boulanger March," airily trilled by Moreau. She pulled the drawer open. There was plenty of time. The mountain could be heard. If it approached she would spring to the door. Madame must not see the invisible. Madame talked. With both hands Céleste rummaged in the drawer. Pencils, pen-holders, an eraser—that was all. Impatiently she tried the lower drawers. They were both locked. Her eyes wandered. There was plenty of time, but little hope. Evidently the volcano below was not in eruption; the song and the talk had ceased. And yet there was nothing to be done.

But she must, positively *must*, get a hold on him, learn the secret, if secret there was; do anything, in fact, to obtain an advantage. Only one thing, and this too obvious to afford hope, yet remained. Stooping, she waved an arm to and fro under the desk. Her hand came in contact with a scrap-basket. She started to draw it into the light. But suddenly, in a careless, rollicking way, as though monsieur were humming at his work, came the air of the "Marseillaise." Quick as a flash she snatched at the scraps in the basket, opened her little side-bag, jammed down a handful, snapped the bag shut, and ran to the door. In an instant it was closed and locked, and she at the far end of the hall in the proprietors' bedroom.

Up came the Mystery, unsuspecting. Through the key-hole she watched him enter his room. When his door was again closed she hurried down. "What an inspiring air," she laughed to Moreau, "is the 'Marseillaise'! I suppose my great-grandmother used to sing it when heads dropped."

"What did you find? What did you find?" whispered Moreau, on wires with curiosity.

"Nothing—nothing, after all."

The wires were immediately unstrung. "Oh, ma p'tite—non, non!"

"It's true; but where's the victim of Boulanger?"

"Out on the stoop. I had to tell her."

"You did? Well, that's all right. Come."

Together they emerged in silence.

"What did you find?" began madame, fanning herself to prevent apoplexy.

"Nothing whatever. It's too bad."

"Why didn't you let me up?"

"I was so afraid the top floor front might catch you. Now with me, of course, it wouldn't matter. I have so little to lose, while you, being the proprietor—"

"Oh," said madame, "charmant!" Then to Moreau: "Jules, give her the present, though she doesn't deserve it. She has not found out. Nom de Dieu, he will kill me with mystery—this peculiar Monsieur Clickety-tap."

Jules, with a mock bow, handed Céleste an envelope. "Yes, it's there," he nodded, as she opened the flap; "don't worry."

Céleste, after actually beholding the prerequisite of existence, sprang up to Monsieur Moreau and kissed him affectionately, then bestowed tokens of endearment on madame likewise, and hurried down the steps. "Good-night, my dear little papa and mamma. Thank you, thank you. I never shall forget."

Turning at last into Irving Place, homeward bound, Céleste found herself in a locality at present sufficiently deserted to render safe the gratification of curiosity. Still walking at a rapid pace, she opened her side-bag. Thereafter, had there been observers, her actions might have suggested a paper chase, in which this quick little figure was playing the hare. From her fingers fluttered to the pavement in a long, uneven line, innumerable white scraps, while now and again the swift hare darted a glance in her wake as though fearing the pursuit of a hound. Evidently there was an innovation heightening the zest of the game. Before tossing aside the bits of paper she glanced at each with a quick scrutiny in the glimmer of the street lights. From her bag to her eyes again and again slipped the quick, nervous fingers, half a word or a blank or a smooch of ink as often piquing her inspection. Apparently she hoped among all the scraps to find a scrap of information. It may have been that the hare in this interesting chase was not so much pursued as pursuing.

Along two or three blocks her trail continued, the fragments lying farther and farther apart, as if with each

went a point in the game and she dreaded to summon the few remaining chances.

Darting her hand into the bag, she held it there and slackened her pace, letting the fateful scraps dribble through her fingers, then grasping them all together tensely and pushing down her little fist hard against the chamois lining, much as a gambler shuffles and grips his last hand at cards, pips down, before plucking up courage to face the inevitable. At last she smiled, tossed her head, and, walking with an easier step—more like a woman of fashion to a trifling raffle—drew out at once the handful. It was not in her code to risk much at the game of life, to lose more than a pretty little pout could adequately deplore. It was such bad form, said Frenchified Spartanism, to show one's feelings, though only to one's self; bad form, you might even admit, to have them. Heavens! She had acted like an adventuress, an intrigante. Dieu—p'tite Céleste—impossible! Ah, here they lay in her palm, half a dozen little scraps—the last. What pretty excitement in a raffle! Oh, she dare hardly look! Her heart was going pitapat. How nice to be on tenter-hooks occasionally. Society life is so monotonous.

Thus she acted the part of social fribbler, much to her own edification, proclaiming to the deserted avenue the frivolous bravery of a modern Spartan.

Soon she had come to Dismal Row. Her eyes, vivaciously snapping glances at the world in general, saw beside her the rusty iron of a familiar stoop. Closing her hand, she ran gayly up the steps, for once insensible to the imprisoning arms, those out-at-elbow banisters between which, as a rule, she almost wriggled for freedom, but now smiled pleasantly as though in a rich embrace. Admitting herself with a latch-key, she hastened happily to her room, crossed to the mantel-shelf, and dropped the scraps into a box of candy. There-

upon, divesting herself of the street costume and returning to the diaphanous luxury of the sea-green kimono, she woke Bonhomme from dreams on the sofa and held up a promising finger.

Drowsily the dachshund flopped up to a sitting posture, and, petitioning Fate with his flapper-like paws, wabbled among the cushions.

Fate, with a tinkling laugh, brought over the box of bonbons. Still with the air of a social fribbler, she now returned to the raffle. "If I win," said she to the sniffing nose, "you shall have a chocolate."

One might have supposed she stood in a drawing-room, surrounded by countless luminaries of that as yet far-distant firmament, the haut monde. Already in fancy she was a fixed star, brilliant, sparkling, planetary to none. What was she drawing for—some beautiful trifle? Yes, and costly—say an ormolu clock. With an air she held the box in one hand, high, so as not to see its contents, and flitted over it the diminutive, tapering fingers of the other.

At last she drew. Down fluttered a flake of paper to tease the sniffing nose. She had drawn a blank. Yes, but there were yet a few chances to the good. Another and another she picked out lightly, till a flurry of scraps snowed down on the patient supplicant, all of them devoid of that sweet deliciousness for which the appetite of Fate and her minion were being so tantalizingly whetted by the game.

She drew the last—drew it, looked at it, and started. Then her brows contracted and her glance wandered in bewilderment. Was this the prize? Céleste, with a puzzled look, stared at the scrap of paper, until at last, the luminaries and the drawing-room suddenly dissolving, she laughed aloud a short, unpleasant little laugh, as if she had been defrauded.

So much for the Spartanism of a mimic fribbler. She

could have brooked a blank, but this was unexpected. Her eyes at once lost their scintillant bravery. The sparkle died to a gleam—the gleam of jealousy.

On the scrap was written in ink the name of a woman.

Céleste selected a bonbon. Bonhomme licked his chops. "No," said she. "No, I didn't win." Denying him the dainty as a reward, she appropriated it herself as a solace.

The bonbon restored refinement. With an air of ennui she went to bed, and soon was worriedly dreaming (she afterwards remembered) that a mountain of gingham first blocked her way to heaven, then ended by crumbling into a desert of scraps of paper, wherein she fell to digging and digging for something or other, to the tune of the "Marseillaise."

So through the night she lay tossing and turning in the heat, while Bonhomme, with wakeful blinks at the darkness, was possibly complicating his hitherto simple philosophy by dull-eyed wonder concerning the efficacy of prayer.

III

The Patron of the Popular

THE building in which Matthew Steele had offices dominated by several stories the spire of a neighboring church. It was new, narrow, white, and had been erected quickly. Three elevators, like local trains, conveyed passengers to the suburbs of the ground floor, while as many "expresses" sped upward with few stops to the twentieth story. Here were the offices of Steele's magazine, known as *The Crowd*, and "The Quarter-Dollar Library" of paper novels. Here, too, somewhat apart from a well-trained army of accountants, illustrators, hack writers, stenographers, subscription-clerks, and office-boys, each at his or her desk, each busy, each earning every penny of the salary paid, presided Baal.

By a system of electric buttons on the top of his desk he could summon at will the head of any department. Through a telephone transmitter below these buttons he kept in touch with all the minutiæ of trade in various cities of the Union. Every detail he controlled personally. Every corner of the offices bore testimony to a modern grasp. The desks were of metal, and the letter cabinet, even the chairs and scrap-baskets. The offices themselves, of course, had concrete floors and metallic door-jambs. "Fires," he was wont to say, "are only profitable in Baxter Street."

Here the immemorial sanctum sanctorum of the editor and publisher was lacking. Steele's desk in the open office commanded a view of every subordinate.

Thus within focus of his lenslike eyes lay the entire range of his dominion. By a glance now and then he could apprise himself of any fluctuation in labor value noticeable in the smallest cog of his vast machine. His mere presence, however, rendered hitches rare.

To gain audience with Baal was not difficult, provided one's name and reason for calling were not withheld from an imp of the realm, ever vigilant on guard.

One afternoon in midwinter, a breezy young woman, barely concealing a smile of contempt at the goblin's demand, consented to this formality. She was dressed in tight-fitting black cloth, even the heavy jacket so cut as to define the outlines of her figure. On her head she wore a velvet toque, tilted enough to reveal a wealth of dark and lustrous hair and accentuate her striking piquancy. She carried lightly in one hand a closely rolled umbrella.

In a moment Céleste had been admitted. Through the desert of workaday people, gray with the dull monotony of rote—the colorless puppetry of Baal's myrmidons—she flitted airily, free of carriage, light of step, a vivid impression in flesh and blood contrasting strongly with routine-bound automata.

Arriving at Matthew's desk, she seated herself, and at once, "I have come to ask—" she began, breathlessly; whereupon, as fate would have it, up came a second meddling imp with an urgent message for his god. "One moment," said Steele, and read the letter.

Céleste turned about and surveyed his domain.

Across the room, behind a low rail, sat several slaves of the writing-machine, their fingers hammering out the toneless music of commerce—*clickety-tap, click-tap.* Near these, behind a wall of high, sloping desks, a line of heads, only their crowns visible, turned ceaselessly now this way, now that, belonging to slaves of the ledger, slaves of the Bible of Trade. Occasionally a hand ap-

peared, an immense page turned slowly, a head bent closer, a pair of shoulders stooped. This was the only variation. From everywhere rose an almost inaudible sound of droning—the voice of the humdrum of hackery, unhopeful, lacking life.

Céleste shuddered. Could she ever say "yes" to the god of so mechanical a system? She fluttered a glance at him now as he sat there, imp at elbow, reading the letter with a frown. With the stump of his right forefinger he tapped on the sheet, then followed the lines of writing with it as if to index the matter in his brain. The fist of his left hand was clinched beside him on the desk. His coat, too large, and of a hard, boardlike cloth, dun-colored, hung stiffly from his stooping shoulders. His collar, shiny, high, and wide apart at the neck, revealed a prominent Adam's apple. Above this the chin, square and self-assertive, protruded aggressively under his straggling mustache. His long, clumsy nose, blank eyes, sparse brows, low forehead, and straw-hued hair completed the god of the machine. Between his lips he was mouthing a never-to-be-lit cigar.

Céleste sighed. With a veiled uplift of her eyes she gazed hopelessly at the wall behind him. On this hung a line of lithograph posters, samples of those that placarded news-stands to advertise "The Quarter-Dollar Library" and *The Crowd*. One of these, rather more flamboyant than the rest, caught her attention.

She started. The pupils of her eyes dilated. Drawing from the palm of her glove a tiny gold bonbonnière, she nipped therefrom with thumb and forefinger an infinitesimal lilac lozenge. Quite she had forgotten her surroundings. The words of Baal, who was now questioning his minion, fell meaningless on her ears. She heard him ask, "Who brought this note?" and the boy answer, "A messenger, sir, from a telegraph-office—no address of the sender," but the words failed to catch her heed.

Her eyes were intent on the poster, her brain intenter still; her ears for the moment were like sub-station telegraph instruments cut off from the main office. Soon, however, they were reconnected.

Steele, nodding away the imp, turned about again. "You were going to tell me—"

"Was I?"

"—the reason of your coming."

"Already I forget. You have kept me waiting so long."

His lips parted in a smile. "Business before pleasure, you know."

She scanned the poster line casually. "Pleasure's an uncertain quantity; not so business, to judge by these. Your sales must be positively enormous."

"Yes, bigger and bigger."

She drew down the corners of her mouth. "There are so many shop-girls in America."

Steele inclined his head, not at all put out. "That's true, I'm glad to say."

"And so many writers," she pursued, idly meditating on the placards, "who satisfy their needs."

"True again, I'm glad to say."

Céleste's glance rested on one particular poster. (Why not? It was the most conspicuous of all.) "Who is this Dolly Cohen? What a horribly sordid name! She, I suppose, is one of the chief caterers to your literary mess. Think of it, fifty thousand sold!"

Steele turned and looked up with pride at the striking advertisement. Its boast was this:

"THE ALTAR OF LOVE."

A Novel.

By DOLLY COHEN,

Author of "The Flame of Folly."

Fiftieth thousand now in press.

"She's a great seller," said Steele, glancing down at the letter, "and yet—"

"And yet what?"

"It's very queer."

"How do you mean?"

Steele sat back in his chair and thrust a hand in each pocket. "The fact is, she's a mystery."

"Oh, how interesting! Tell me about it."

"There's little to tell. Her first manuscript, *The Flame of Folly*, came to us in September. The book sold like wildfire. I wanted to get hold of the woman. Her address was merely a private box, one of those that questionable characters hire in little cigar-shops for clandestine correspondence. I wrote and asked her to call, but she never did so. A month later, in came *The Altar of Love*. It has beaten the first all hollow. I was determined to meet Miss Cohen. She is far too valuable to lose. I wanted to make a contract with her—give her a salary. The royalties are excessive. I wanted to have her under my eye, right here in the office."

He paused, frowning.

"Of course," nodded Céleste. "Well?"

"I sent one of the office-boys to watch the place where her letters were delivered—a little express office on the West Side—and follow her home. He stood there hour after hour for two weeks, but not a woman came. At night I had another there, with the same luck. And yet we know she received communications from us, because they were answered. Moreover, she must have sent some one in her stead who saw the boys. Read this!" He took the letter from the desk and handed it to Céleste. "Like all this woman's correspondence and manuscript," he observed, hopelessly, "the thing is typewritten."

"*Matthew Steele, Esq.:*

"DEAR SIR,—As I have repeatedly stipulated that there must be no personal intercourse between us, kindly refrain from disregarding my wishes. Women will have their whims, you know, and this is one of mine.

"I return your check. Did I not ask you for actual cash? Please continue, as before, to send bank-notes in sealed packages. I am willing to take the risk of their transit by mail. Yours very truly,

"DOLLY COHEN.

"P. S.—I shall be obliged to seek another publisher if any more attempts are made to force the issue. D. C."

Céleste glanced through the letter twice. "The plot thickens," she said, at last, lightly.

Steele took back the letter and thrust it in a pigeonhole. "I sent her a check, hoping she would use it."

"Why should that—"

"Then she or somebody else would have endorsed it and that would have been a clew. Depend upon it, Dolly Cohen is a pseudonym."

"A pseudonym!" Céleste shuddered with disgust. "That horrid, cheap name! Who would choose it?"

"True," allowed Steele; "that's what I've been thinking."

Céleste fell to tracing arabesques on the concrete floor with her umbrella-point.

"You see," said Steele, "it's a puzzler."

"Yes, quite like a novel itself. Are the books well written?"

For answer Steele pointed over his shoulder with his ever-obtrusive semi-forefinger. "You've seen the ad.," he laughed, shortly. "Figures are the only critics I go by. The first was a thriller, with plenty of color; so is the second, but a little gamier, a little more spicy, you know. I wrote and asked her for one like that. Hers are the only books I've ever published in cloth. They

were both so quick, catchy, and snappy, so much livelier than the rest, that I said to myself, 'These will sell for more than twenty-five cents.' Great mystery, though, isn't it? I think I'll have it written up before long. I'll offer a prize in *The Crowd* for a guess at Miss—or Mrs. —Cohen's identity. Of course nobody 'll know, so it don't cost a penny. Eh—what?"

"I didn't say anything," murmured Céleste, straightening up and flicking a speck of dust from her skirt.

This trifling motion of her fingers filled perhaps a second of time. In that instant her mind worked with more than electric rapidity. A decision was simultaneous with the conception of an idea, yet the flicking away of the speck hid it completely.

She raised her head. "Yes, it is a mystery, and yet how rarely you fail, Matthew!" Her lashes drooped.

Steele said nothing, for once another's open esteem causing no protrusion of his lower jaw. As a rule it shot forward, self-confidently, at such an appreciation, but now hung low, his under-lip falling from the line of stained teeth with vacuous despondence.

"It's true," she nodded, nibbling a second lilac dainty, which brought the curves of her mouth into play and deepened its dimples.

Steele leaned closer, elbow on desk, fingers moving. "There's another woman I have never succeeded in—"

She smiled coquettishly. "In what?"

"In getting hold of," he concluded, with blunt force.

Céleste surreptitiously pressed one of the chatelaine charms hanging at her side — the diminutive silver hunchback, her favorite porte-bonheur. "It was about your failure in this direction that I came." She paused.

"Go on." He glanced furtively over the desk-top at his underlings, for once ill at ease near the droning hive. "Go on."

Her lashes fluttered and drooped. "You so rarely fail," she whispered.

He shifted his chair towards her. "What?"

"Oh, nothing—nothing. I must hurry off. How foolish to have supposed that one could talk here! I had imagined—"

Steele frowned at the hive. "Wait, we'll go where we can be alone."

"No, no; not now. I'm no longer in a talkative mood. I'm hungry." Her laughter tinkled clear and musical above the monotonous clicking of the typewriters.

Steele consulted his watch. "Come, we'll go out to dinner."

"What! Dinner at five? I never dine till eight. It's not de rigueur."

"Well, then, say eight. I'll come for you."

Céleste pursed her lips consideringly and traced another pattern with her umbrella-point. "But you haven't brought him yet."

"That Lloyd?"

"Of course that Lloyd. Who else?"

Steele gnawed his mustache. "I guess he's too good to turn hack, or maybe he's gone elsewhere. There are lots of others who would put him in harness. Why don't you drop that nonsense? Come, we'll say eight o'clock for dinner."

Céleste, coquettishly delaying, glanced up at him with a smile and a pout. At last the smile brightened into a "yes," and she rose quickly.

Along the aisle—the king's highway of the Mammonian realm—Baal followed her. And for once in their lives his subjects made bold to lift an inquisitive gaze, a dead-and-alive stare, as though beginning to question his sovereignty.

In the hall Steele sought to detain her. "Tell me—*here*—one word."

She pushed the elevator button. "Wait, you're too impatient."

"No, you must!" He caught her wrist, his eyes moist, or, rather, damp, so lack-lustre was even their passion.

The elevator rushed up behind her. The gate grated open. She backed in. The gate slid to between them. "To-night!" she waved, with mischievous mockery, and straightway descended from his view, gayly as the première danseuse of Inferno drops homeward through a stage trap.

When Steele arrived he was shown to her room.

She greeted him mysteriously and shut the door. "Promise you won't be angry?"

"What do you mean? Aren't you going?"

"Oh yes, yes, but—" Her bosom was all a-flutter with trepidation. "I hardly dare—"

"What is it? Speak out."

"Will you promise?"

"Yes, I promise."

Finger to lips, she drew him to the curtained recess, and, parting the portières, hesitated. "Word of honor?"

"Of course!"

She darted into the bedroom, he following in heavy bewilderment.

Near her bed the candle flickered uncertainly. In a corner beyond the light stood a table on the top of which some bulky object, now hidden by the landlady's atrocious quilt, loomed big and mysterious.

Stepping towards it, then pausing, hesitant, timid, and yet on edge with excitement, Céleste at last, taking heart, slipped over to the corner and threw back the quilt.

There, in a black metal cover, stood a typewriting-machine!

Steele surveyed it blankly.

Céleste smiled up at him. "Behold your mystery!"

He started forward; gazed at her. Then suddenly his jaw fell. Never had she seen so quick a flash of comprehension spring into his eyes.

"You!" he almost whispered. "You—Dolly Cohen! Gawd!" The flare of understanding broadened. "But I knew you could do it! I always said so. I told you to try. What a fool I've been not to have guessed it!"

Her face was flushed with pride. "And it's not a pseudonym!"

"What, you don't mean—"

"Yes, it's my true name—my own poor, cheap little name. Father was an American artist who died in Paris. Though my present papa would stop my allowance if he heard me say so, I was born, as it were, informally."

Steele laughed a coarse laugh. Evidently in his own mind he had defined the episode brutally.

She shuddered. A spade should never be called a spade. Bald truth was against all delicacy. "Come," she cried, with quick petulance, "this is a gloomy place to talk. We'll do our hobnobbing at dinner." Catching his hand, she drew him out after her.

In a corner of the Café M—— she chatted to her heart's content. "Oh, we must have a little wine—champagne—the spirit of Paris! Come to us now, dear ghost of the sun's last ray! . . . Of course, Matthew, you'll break your rule on such an occasion. I suppose you can guess what my confiding in you means?"

Over her glass she repeated the glance with which she had once sought to enmesh another. Then it had been her nature challenging Apollo; now it was her art surrendering to Baal. And the art that should have been to her an ugly shame was a pretty little sham at which her innermost self was laughing. Nature could be counterfeited to a nicety.

Far down in the shadows of her eyes glimmered lights as of will-o'-the-wisps, drawing him deeper and deeper into the influence of her darkness. Then a smile broke over her features; the light broadened. Art had hinted that nature should be free—open—all at once glad in yielding. "Oh, you stupid," she whispered, "to sit there glaring at me . . . not knowing . . ."

His voice was throaty and dry. "Not knowing what?"

She lowered her lashes. "That—a 'yes' may be spoken in silence."

His hand closed on his glass, threatening its fragility. She saw the stump of his maimed forefinger whiten with the grip.

"Don't, don't, Matthew! My spirit is in that glass. You'll crush it!" His eyes at the moment were almost human, or at least bigly animal. The long-harried hound was having his day after years of waiting. Céleste smiled. "Do I make you forget your business? . . . Do I? . . . Do I? . . . More than ever before? . . . That's right, drink. Touch your glass to mine. Nobody's looking. Here's to Dolly Cohen, the future Mrs. Matthew Steele! . . . That's right. And you, too, shall be transformed. Do you remember I promised that one night? . . . A blending of old world romance with new world commercialism. . . . Here, garçon, two absinthes! . . . Matthew, we'll drink to the blend in opalescent light! Think of it; the world will know! And the money that's made is all in the family. Send me the checks direct after this; there's no more mystery. Yes, the world will know Dolly Cohen. . . . Yes, yes; on the whole, I'd better keep that name. It's famous. It's valuable. . . . And I'll have a salon! People will come—notables. And you shall be so changed. You shall be positively polished. . . ." She laughed extravagantly. "Together we'll reign on the summit of Parnassus. . . . Good!

Here's the stuff to pledge in. Drink! Drink to our wedding-day!"

Steele, carried away by the champagne, more still by her eyes, and even further by the moment of attainment, started to comply. But the odor of the absinthe, subtle, vague, indescribable, made him hesitate. He sniffed uncertainly at the brim.

Céleste bit her lips behind her upraised glass. "Quick! It's an acquired taste. I felt that way at first myself. Come—our wedding-day!"

She touched her glass to his; her fingers met his own. Her glance was a fatal opiate. The strength went out of him.

"To you and me," he said, crudely.

Later in the evening he tried it again.

"Now you fascinate me," she told him. "Now you are different."

By the end of the month she had taught an old dog a new trick. Not unlike the beggar Bonhomme, he found that only when he pleased her by its performance did she genuinely smile upon his devotion.

IV

The Spirit of Vaudeville

MARCH, as aggressive as ever, played the lion with a roar. The wind, a great swashbuckler on a raid from the far northwest, offended retiring natures. The streets of the city were filled with biscumbered snow. Cart it away as they would, the White Brigade could not succeed against the alternate fall and thaw. Slush resulted. At this particular season—to quote Céleste—New York's was a "vulgar climate."

Pursuers of pleasure, however, braved even the ribaldry of March. Albeit on a Sunday morning retiring natures prove worthy of the name, on a Saturday night their front is bolder.

Observe the Corinthian Music-hall, for example, on one particular pre-Sabbatical occasion.

Hither zealots of pleasure, devotees of the great god Bosh, reading the message of his prophet on the billboards, had multitudinously thronged. The god and his consort, Fol-de-rol—who, we may suppose, is the supreme soubrette—had demanded of their souls a pilgrimage to the shrine of the Absurd. Fanatical in their veneration of the relics there to be displayed, they had girded up their loins and come.

The place was packed to its doors. From floor to roof, tier on tier, sat the faithful, some irreverently bored, some devoutly gay, others proving their zeal by the penance of standing huddled and jostled from rail to wall.

Where orchestra, balcony, and galleries were all so

densely crowded, an empty space was noticeable. All of the boxes were alive with faces save one, on a level with the stage and adjoining it, which had as yet no occupants. Towards this, with a kind of subconscious anticipation of curiosity, many eyes now and again were turned. Its emptiness was out of place. It palled. The audience wanted to be complete. There was yet an entrance to be made in the extravaganza on the hither side of the footlights. Time and again the glancing eyes expected to see new figures and faces enlivening the blackness of that right-hand corner. This, however, was but the psychological effect of a conspicuous lack. Save with a few it was unappreciable.

Perhaps but a single individual regarded the box impatiently.

He was a young man of large, loose, prodigal build, who from a seat on one of the aisles repeatedly looked for the figures and faces. Next to this Philistine a companion—evidently boon, to judge by their intercourse—either failed to notice the frequent glances or ignored them with indifference.

Near the knees of the two a low shelf, projecting back from the seats before them, held preventives against suffocation from the closeness of the atmosphere. These they resorted to not inoften. No sooner were the tall glasses empty than up went the giant's right hand, clumsily dominant, whereupon one of the assiduous waiters, always alive to an errand of mercy, glided with restoratives down the aisle.

From the comrades twain, as from their fellow-pilgrims, rose in thick clouds the incense of the temple. And the orthodox worship was laughter.

A couple of clownish dialecticians, having sufficiently murdered humor and the Queen's English, had just gone wrestling from the stage. The curtain fell. People took notice of their neighbors.

"Big crowd," remarked O'Brien. "Thundering close!"

Enoch nodded. Indolently blowing a ring of cigarette smoke, he watched it ascend through the heavy atmosphere. Recently, like a swimmer after a dive to the depths, he had risen to the surface of life, and at present lay there idly floating with the ripples.

The curtain rose again. Another sacred relic of the faith was about to be exhibited. She had come from Spain once before in the eighties and had returned for a last farewell. Evidently time and home had dealt kindly with the favorite. Obviously she had never starved. But what if she had grown stout? What if her motions, once alluring, sensuous, gypsy-wild, now somewhat suggested a Brobdingnagian gambol? A fig for the scoffing, irreverent critic who had lately proclaimed that "a Rubens bacchante," "a feminine Gargantua," was come to town! Such pagans are not of the faith. The great god Bosh frowns on their blasphemy. What if she had grown fat? Even her largeness was a source of satisfaction. If her fame appealed to the World in the crowd, it was this very amplitude of hers—coarse and orgiastic—that appealed to the Flesh in them, and her foreign fire to the Devil.

Even now she had a way with her. Again and again the gods encored, and the farewell was by no means a fiasco. The motif of the Andalusian dance is passion blent with pride. This she interpreted vehemently, until at the last she stood there darkly, scornfully defiant, her eyes flinging down a challenge at the World, the Flesh, and the Devil. This was her last finale. Making her exit, she veiled her smile with a haughty frown. She seemed to mock them, and they liked it.

The curtain dropped. A buzz and hum filled the house; hundreds of programmes rattled. What next? (So insatiate is the appetite for change.)

Waiters sped back and forth. Here and there an

arm went up, a head turned, a finger beckoned. (So pressing are the needs of thirst.)

"Horribly close," repeated O'Brien, gazing at the empty box.

Lloyd said nothing. The curtain had risen again. He glanced at the stage. A French poodle, under the eye of its Parisian master, was seated at a miniature piano. Once or twice the trainer frowned and his whip twitched behind him, whereat the dog, its shaven back to the footlights and tufted tail depending from the piano-stool, held its forepaws over the broad keys and with much hesitation picked out a tune at last recognizable as "Home, Sweet Home."

O'Brien laughed. Enoch's face for a moment was genuinely amused.

The showman, tricked out in a frilled shirt and satin knickerbockers, stepped lightly to the footlights, clasped his folded opera-hat to his heart, and bowed, smiling. In that debonair bow and smile, as in the dog's peruke-like tail, the spirit of vaudeville seemed eloquently expressed.

Not more so, though, than in the eyes of Enoch.

Loud laughter and applause rewarded the musical caniche. Like the Andalusian lady, he was popular. But his second act—the pawing of suspended sleigh-bells—missed fire.

Some one had appeared far down in the empty right-hand corner. Those in the orchestra-chairs turned their heads, those in the balcony leaned forward. At once the new-comer caught their interest; not that half a dozen in the whole house could have named her, but because of her vivid personality and brilliance as she flashed into the shadows of the box.

Seating herself in the foremost chair, the object of this curiosity threw off a long, white cape embroidered in gold, and, raising her lorgnette, returned with viva-

cious interest the general stare. She was a very small woman, and wore a gown entirely of white velvet, which, soft as the faintly olive skin above it, seemed almost a part of her person, and had apparently no opening whatever. Contrasting with this, her hair, coiled high, coronet-wise, looked black as a stormy night, save for an almost purple sheen, as now and again she turned her head and the electric lights glimmered across it. High above her forehead, in the centre of the natural coronet, lay embedded a crescent of diamonds. In addition to this she wore no ornament save a necklace of antique paste, which a connoisseur, had one inspected it through an opera-glass, might have classed with Parisian workmanship of the Renaissance. From the necklace, with its curiously wrought setting, depended a dove, composed of brilliants, of the sort once worn by devout court ladies to symbolize the Third Person of the Trinity.

This, be it known, was the young woman spoken of by an obscure periodical as the "Queen of Bohemia." Her books, however, by which she had won pre-eminence in a certain doubtful coterie, bore a name far more sordid and smacking less of romance. The name was Dolly Cohen. Yet in spite of this, and her dark, voluptuous beauty, there was little to suggest Semitic descent, except at constantly rarer intervals a look akin to cupidity which had been recognized by the dress-makers and milliners with whom she had first bargained after her sudden rise to what the doubtful coterie called Fame.

With her into the box to-night came several men, one tall, angular, and evidently not long trained to the wearing of his evening clothes. Lloyd saw the figure of this, her principal courtier, sway uncertainly as it bent over her. The others, who seated themselves behind the "queen," appeared to be merely a few white patches, only their faces and shirt-fronts vaguely visible in the dark.

Goliath gazed at the box, then, being answered by a wave of the gold lorgnette, took a long draught from the glass before him. "She's come."

"Who?"

"Look over there. Don't you remember?"

Lloyd followed his friend's glance. "Yes, I think so; but—she—"

"She is the one you so unceremoniously refused to meet that evening. Lord, you put me in hot water!"

Lloyd's glance rested long on the woman's face. She appeared to be deeply interested in the stage.

A famous Japanese juggler, having supplanted the Frenchman, was balancing on the top of a billiard-cue a white billiard-ball, and on the top of that a red one.

Her eyes were seemingly fascinated by the tremulous spot of crimson.

Lloyd followed her gaze and watched it too.

The house was breathless.

"She writes novels," announced Gol, looking into his glass. "But not the sort, I suppose, that you'd deign to read."

Lloyd's interest in the red spot's equilibrium seemed to grow more intent. Nevertheless, "Does she?" he said, mechanically. "What's her name?"

"The dickens! Don't you know? I forgot you'd been keeping close so long. It's Dolly Cohen."

The balls fell.

Is there not, perhaps, so exquisite a delicacy of balance in these feats that even the sudden start of one person in a breathless audience, or, we dare almost say, a sudden emotion, might trouble the ether and ruin the performance?

Even O'Brien's phlegmatic placidity was disturbed. Scarcely knowing why he did so, he turned and surveyed his friend inquiringly. "What did you say?"

"Not a word."

"That's queer. I thought—Lord, man, what's wrong? Here!" He held his glass out.

Enoch smiled and shook his head. "No; perhaps I've had enough already. The air, as you say, is stifling."

"But whiskey doesn't turn one white as a sheet."

"Well, you see, somehow—oh, but you can't understand. My own fate seemed to become wrapped up in the balance of that red—"

"Bah, that's nervousness—or the liver! Have you been bothered about anything lately?"

To this there was no answer.

"I've got it," suggested O'Brien. "Come with me afterwards to Dolly's. There's a supper every Saturday night. She'd cure any man of moping."

Enoch shook his head.

"Oh, you wouldn't mind going. She's irreproachable. Being Parisian, she's Frenchy, of course; but, honestly, Dolly is as good as can be. Now just to show you. When I first knew her she had assumed a French name because it sounded well. Her father was an American Jew who lived in the Quarter. Well, the old man showed up one day and she hadn't the heart to drop him, so back she goes to her real name, though she detests the very sound of it. She told me all this herself. I call it pretty square for one like her. You see, she is way above him."

Enoch lighted another cigarette. "Have you seen this Mr. Cohen?"

"No, nor has anybody else. She says she's tried to raise him to her level, but I suppose it's out of the question to make the old duck presentable."

Lloyd nodded with a vague smile. "I suppose it is."

"You'd better come," said Goliath, and Enoch's glance stole round to the box, slowly, almost fearfully, yet with a certain fascinated look of exploration, not un-

like that of a child who peers towards a dark corner in which he dreads to find a bogie.

Her eyes met his.

"Thanks," he said to O'Brien, with a swift transition to reckless gayety, "I will."

V

The Queen of Bohemia

CAST aside is the cocoon of the chrysalis; the butterfly has emerged resplendent; the long-previsioned "some day" is at last the present.

Attend we now at the bower of the butterfly, the court of the Queen of Bohemia.

Beyond doubt the royal apartment even outshone the prevision. No longer did jarring notes — hideous discords of decoration—cry to heaven of a regal taste despoiled by boarding-house atrocities. All was as it should be. So, at least, proclaimed the queen regnant.

She took to the small but luxurious suite in a white marble building not far west of Broadway as the proverbial duck to water, the cat to cream. Yes, this—*this*—was the scene of the "some day"—her paradise. No longer did fate demand a dreary probation in purgatory. After years of waiting she had come to her own. At last Griselda was in the princely palace, and though the motives of Céleste had not been quite so ingenuous as those of the sore-tried damsel, at least her patience had proved as worthy of reward.

How she loved to heighten the realization of attainment by repeated surveys of the drawing-room, to note each separate advance with rapturous eyes! For instance, the velours curtains were now—praise Heaven!—superseded by hangings of heavy, yellow damask, while the reproductions of those delicate fancies by Boucher and Watteau, and the Whistler etching, hung as they

should against patternless paper of a pale-saffron tint, which not only held and mellowed the lamp-light, but harmonized well with several curious bowls and vases of chrysanthemums always distributed, as if at random, under the lamps. Better still the destiny of Time and Love. Instead of a sojourn at the hostel of the Three Brass Balls, they and their ormolu charge, now no longer degraded to a mustard-colored mantel-piece—odious memory!—were happily ensconced on a low, wooden, ivory-white chef-d'œuvre of the cabinet craft, supported by miniature pilasters, whereup a number of delicately carved Ariels were flying with nosegays for a nymph prone in slumber under the shelf.

But the taste of Céleste—or Dolly, to use the name of her fame—the taste so suddenly rendered gratifiable—had apparently lost its balance, and, now that she was independent of convention, made bold to dispute the æsthetic value of that former prerequisite, the Touch Refined.

Here and there, in color or design, some daring contrast, some outré bravado in ornamentation, betrayed a lack of that rich, confident quietude observable in older quarters of the town.

And the most outré of all these decorative surprises were, with few exceptions, the guests themselves. A popular and spicy society weekly, chaffing its obscure contemporary who had dubbed her Bohemia's Queen, had recently likened her realm to a beautiful pasteboard Parnassus in the bewildering extravaganza of Gotham—a mock mountain whereon indigent supernumeraries, donning the lion's skin, carnivorously devoured game suppers and regaled themselves with nectareal champagne.

More perceptive than many of her kind, Dolly had inwardly confessed to the neatness of the thrust. None could know better than she that hers was not the sum-

mit of attainment. This she considered the first heaven. The seventh yet reared its pinnacle above her. Of course, her Parnassans were only skin-deep lions; but she could practise well enough on these in order at last to tame and drive the genuine celebrities.

To-night, as usual, behind the sparkle in her eyes lay deep a look of categorical inspection. Under her smile she frowned. The shams were still in the majority. What a motley comic-opera court she kept! Pah! She must weed them out remorselessly. What a stagy lot they were, and how impossible! Probably to the uninitiated many would have been awe-inspiring—the fur-and-mane befools children. Perhaps to the inexperienced each of the notables would have appeared, in his way, a phenomenon, a kind of temperamental freak, a striking personality, unique and apart from the ordinary ruck of human nature. But Dolly, singularly gifted with a faculty of social divination, knew better. Most were but types, hackneyed examples, of a class of human platitudes. Notice, for instance, the wrecked virtuoso, a short man, painfully obese. He sat, as a rule, in a corner with an air of everlasting lethargy, his sallow cheeks and the bulgy substructure of his chin effectually concealing whatever amazing collar and scarf-pin he may have boasted. The name of this melancholy poseur, variously mispronounced save for its final *ski*, signified Polish origin. According to the prevalent notion, he had once been a great violinist, but, alas! on a certain fateful night, of which there were numerous romantic legends, his instrument, a beloved Stradivarius, had been stolen from his room. Then and there, under the weight of grief, he had sworn never again to take bow in hand until his departed inamorata had been regained.

Another case, somewhat similar in pathos, was that of a long-necked lady across the room. She had been, they said, a wonderful soprano, who was soon to have made

her début at the Metropolitan, when, alack! owing to her charitable instincts and delight in ministering to the poor in the wintriest weather, she had contracted one day a severe malady of the larynx, and had been forced to speak in a cracked whisper ever since.

These two unfortunates, like many who, but for certain misgivings, might derive a pleasurable companionship in misery, avoided each other with studious care.

They, however, were exceptional in deserving sympathy. The majority, according to the general belief, were really an enviable lot. Observe, for instance, the proverbial grave and portly gentleman who stood, as a rule, with one elbow on the mantel-shelf, and wore on the lapel of his shiny frock-coat a medal concerning which there was poignant curiosity. His manner of speech, excepting an occasional low ejaculation, such as "Diable!" "Sapristi!" and the like, was patriotic in accent if not in words. The medal, which unfortunately bore some Eastern inscription, was declared, despite varying opinions, to be the emblem of some Egyptian or Arabic order, conferred upon only one or two prominently valorous soldiers in a hundred years. Its wearer modestly evaded questions with the air of a man who is silent concerning his Legion of Honor or Victoria Cross.

As though to shame this gentleman for his foreign tendencies, a short, thick-set individual, with flaxen hair and rubicund countenance, wore an American flag in his button-hole, and at the end of an evening frequently would strike up, with childlike ingenuousness, "My country, 'tis of thee." His name was Herr Wunderlich.

In addition to these in the company there were many others scarcely less worthy of regard: several painters whose productions were humbly termed "studies" (which should be looked at from afar); several poets whose efforts were too good for publication, too sacred for the perusal of a profane world.

This, of course, allowed Dolly, was no more the true Bohemia, which detests shams, than the true Society (at present she spelled it with a capital "S"), which, at least, wears affectations gracefully. But, fortune be thanked! already Society was faintly tapping at her door. No woman, it's true, had yielded as yet—Heaven speed the day of a woman's coming!—but a number of callow, well-dressed youths had responded to her roundabout invitations. Sweetly she smiled on these lambs among the lions. These, at least, were real. They had sisters, they had mothers. Some day—ah, still that inevitable "some day"—after the mock lions had been driven to their lairs, would it not be possible to beguile that flock of wary sheep within her fold?

Cogitating thus beneath her dazzling vivacity, Dolly received her court. At midnight, in the large bay-window, she sat enthroned in an antique arm-chair of massive and majestic proportions, which served to accentuate the diminutive piquancy of her form. The wood-work of the chair's back, heavily carved with griffons, wiverns, and other heraldic devices, framed a high expanse of brass-studded, scarlet leather. Against this her head, surmounted by her storm-black hair in which the diamond crescent vividly glittered, conveyed a striking impression. Idly extended on the chair-arms, her own, sleeved in the white velvet, contrasted markedly with the rough-wrought carving of the wood.

Before her, at the moment of enthronization, stood one of the lambs. "Please forgive me," he bleated, "for not having come till to-night, but—"

She smiled graciously. "But—?"

"Ah, well; you know, I—"

"Ho!" she laughed. "I'm not sure you deserve forgiveness. There seems to be no excuse." Then, as if aside: "Many, I'm told, would be glad of one to come." The lamb looked so helplessly doleful that Dolly must

perforce metaphorically pat him into ease. "I ask very few, you know." (Alas! thought she, too few of the right sort. What irony in the compliment!)

The lambkin raised his head. "Oh, really, now—"

The patting process continued. "It's true; but, somehow, after I saw you that first night, I couldn't—" She lowered her lashes.

From that very moment he was hers. So gentle was the shepherdess with her flock, so guileless were the hearts of her lambs.

At once growing bolder, he proceeded, as it were, to gambol with all manner of awkward playfulness in repartee. Inwardly she sighed; outwardly she smiled upon his antics. Ever and again she was casting covert glances at the clock. "Yes, still," she prettily temporized within herself—"still the woman is sitting by the Forge of Life, waiting. Throw her the heart, Love. Throw her the heart, hot from your anvil, before the old Reaper spies her." She looked at the figures; the face of the timepiece, as usual, propounded a more perplexing riddle. Thanks to its tittuppy embellishment, she could not discern from across the room whether or not her chances were seriously diminished. Would he come? Was it already too late to expect him?

Before long all the lambs had gathered about, and were gambolling to their hearts' content. But soon the notable of the Arabian order, martially striding forward, descended, wolf-like, straight upon the fold. In a moment he had monopolized the conversation. Faint of heart, the flock dispersed. To flatter him, she smiled with commiseration at their retreating backs, and whispered: "That was worthy of Sennacherib. But — the poor little things!—how could you?"

Sennacherib regarded her with imperious mien and bent over her stiffly. "Why do you look at the clock?

He won't come. The boy you told us about has more good sense than any of us."

She raised her eyebrows wearily. "Why don't you leave me for good? I'm not keeping you."

"But you are."

"How?" Her lips were parted in a smile; she moistened them almost imperceptibly.

"I don't know. That's the worst of it."

Dolly laughed with pleasure. "Oh, Sennacherib, Sennacherib, do I offer you lambs to prey upon for nothing—not to speak of grouse, terrapin, and red-heads?"

The general, straightening up in wrath, scowled and gnawed his mustache. Conceiving a dramatic speech, he would thereupon have delivered it, but was abashed to find her eyes, utterly heedless of his umbrage, gazing dolorously at the door. The speech fell to pieces in his brain. "What folly!" he mouthed, catching at a fragment of the wrecked philippic—"what utter folly! Why do you look? He won't come."

Dolly shrugged and glanced at the clock.

"I repeat," continued Sennacherib, delving further in the débris, "he has more sense. Perhaps he has been warned. He knows what idiots we are to worship you so. How insane we are to be such slaves! How positively egregious—yes, egregious!" The word evidently pleased his grandiloquence.

But Dolly gave no sign of admiration. The clock was striking. The hammer of Cupid fell. *Ting*, rang the tiny heart on the anvil—twelve times. Hearing a step in the hall, she shot a glance at the door, then as quickly looked away.

"I tell you," proclaimed the bemedalled cavalier, growing coldly disquisitious, "there is no use—"

"Enough!" she whispered, with a sudden mocking uplift of her eyes. "I surrender. It would now be the height of folly to watch the door. He has come." Her

laughter, sharp and musical as Cupid's hammer, tinkled amid the general chatter and rustle like sleigh-bells in a storm.

Enter the biggest of the Philistines, Goliath by name. To the right and left, bowing unceremonious good-natured greetings, he made directly for the throne. The general, with a muttered "Diavolo!" retreated haughtily. The queen, appearing not to notice her belated ambassador, half turned, and at once became interested in lowering the lamp-wick beside her.

The chatter and rustle had fallen to a hush. Behind the familiar figure of Goliath came that of a stranger, an airy youth, who, to judge by the fling and natural ease of his bearing, was neither a lion nor yet a lamb.

One and all, they looked on curiously while O'Brien ushered him into the presence. "I've brought an old friend to-night. Do you mind?"

Dolly turned. "Of course not." The tone sounded conventionally cordial.

Goliath stepped aside, the stranger forward. "I want to introduce," said the giant envoy, "Mr. Lloyd."

With an air of frank pleasure her majesty held out a hand. For an instant Enoch paused with a puzzled look, as though forgetting his surroundings. He was, at the moment, one might have said, face to face with some amazing mystery.

Recovering himself quickly, he took her hand. As he did so, her eyes seemed baleful with an intimate perplexity almost equal to his own.

"Mr. Lloyd?—Lloyd? Surely I've heard that name. Are you Mr. Enoch Lloyd?"

"Yes, I suppose so."

"Suppose? How enigmatical! Are you the author of *The Greatest Good?*"

"I was."

Her eyes opened wide and surveyed him with daring

admiration. Turning to the others with a dash, "What ho!" called her mock-majesty. "Here's an original! Here's a riddle! Foh! you are all prosaically lucid in comparison. Peers of the realm, give ear! Here's a greater than you all!"

She turned to Enoch. "Kneel, sir knight. Kneel."

Lloyd hesitated. What wild tomfoolery was this, and at their very first meeting? Had ever another such a reckless fling, such verve, such bewildering vivacity? His cheeks flushed, his brain whirled. This was living at a gallop. Her mood caught him. First she had made him embarrassed by crying him to the crowd. Instantly he had felt her power—had conceived a fear of it; then, in a twinkling, that power was on his side.

"Kneel, I say. What, sirrah, do you hesitate?"

He knelt.

Over his head she held a gracious hand. "I create thee—" she proclaimed, loftily; then, laughing, "Well, what do I create thee? Yes, I have it. Thou shalt be Lord High Executioner." She started in spite of herself. "No, no, no! Not that!" She bent and whispered in his ear: "Not that, never *that*, I pray you." Then erect again and aloud: "Thou shalt be Lord High Chancellor, Keeper of the Seals — the seals of — er — state papers." Once more she bent to him. "Manuscript, I mean." She straightened up. "First Lord of the Treasury." Then again, under her breath, "Very generous, of course, and the queen won't rob you any more." Whereafter, in sovereign accents, "Rise," she commanded—"rise, my Lord No-name," and as he did so, "Or, rather, my lord of two names," she whispered in his ear.

"What in the world—" began Enoch, starting back.

"Silence!" exclaimed her majesty, and he controlled himself with a laugh.

"Vive la reine!" bleated a daring lamb near the piano,

who, being thereupon terrified by the sound of his own voice, retreated behind his fellows.

"Vive la reine!" murmured the flock, taking heart of their numbers to gambol under her smiles.

"Vive la reine!" cried the bubbling Herr Wunderlich.

"Vive la reine!" rolled the be-medalled cavalier, emphatically correcting the pronunciation of his predecessors.

Lloyd, surveying them all, at first looked utterly bewildered. The whole of bedlam seemed to be clamoring about his ears. Of late his sense of the ludicrous had not been touched; almost he had lost it. Fate had stolen it from him. In the midst of this motley court he felt like Alice in Wonderland. But soon the naïveté of genuine youth—that never-amazable quality which enabled Alice to look upon the Astonishing as though it were the Natural—came to his rescue. Had the melancholy, stout gentleman in the corner then and there approached him saying, "Sir, I am a walrus," he would have bowed with grave formality. The spirit of inanity had entered into him—the soul of Fol-de-rol. They were all like so many nonsense rhymes, and he their chuckling reader. His humor had been touched. Correctly, Dolly had seen it latent in his eyes—and something else.

As Goliath turned away, she now proceeded to please that something. Again addressing the roomful, her voice became ironical, even caustic. "Mr. Lloyd's book, *The Greatest Good*, unlike so many, was not 'too beautiful to print.'" With which pleasantry she turned towards him, adding, in simple earnestness, "Mr. Lloyd, it flatters me to have you here."

Enoch by now was more than at ease; he felt, for the first time in many months, almost elated. Yet they were a despicable set—abominable.

Apparently she read the latter thought. "Queer lot,"

she whispered, "aren't they? I use them as types, you know." Her eyes were scanning them amusedly.

"*You?* Oh, of course; but—er—you must be very daring—very daring indeed," he repeated, loudly.

She flashed a defiant glance at him. "Look here," she nervously asked, "do you intend to betray me? No, no; of course you won't." She regained her light composure. "Remember, you're not the executioner. But come, you must meet them individually. Now there's a type in the corner—a virtuoso, if you please, gone to rack and ruin. His name is Legion. As a matter of fact, it ends in *ski*. I call him Mr. Blankski, because I can't remember the first syllable. Pathetic figure, isn't he? Poor man, his sighs assure me he was a great violinist once, but now he mourns a stolen Stradivarius. Then over there, near the mantel-shelf, behold Sennacherib. He knows the double meanings of twenty different languages. Look at the flock of lambs near the piano. Those are his victims. When they make so bold as to sing my praises, down he pounces and scatters them abroad. And there, near the dining-room door—no, don't look now, wait a minute—stands a pathetic, sometime soprano. Her voice froze within her one winter's night while she was ministering to the poor. I call her the Snark. A peculiar specimen. Snarkus redivivus. See! Now you may look. Isn't she a snark?" Dolly laughed nervously.

Thus she ran through the list of her leonine celebrities like a showman at the Zoo, while underneath this running fire her nerves were on edge with anxiety lest she should fail to hold him as she wished. "Which do you want to meet? What? None at all? Oh, but you must. They are all dying to know you."

Lloyd surveyed the room with amused contempt.

By the cleverest move imaginable she had taken him into her confidence. Whatever she might be, this daz-

zling little influence beside him was immeasurably above the rest. He and she were again merely spectators at a vaudeville performance. It was to laugh. He did so; but suddenly he started. His eyes had roamed from the Snark to a pair of heavy portières, which, being slightly parted, gave him a glimpse of the dimly lighted dining-room.

"Who is that? Who is that in there peering at me?"

Following his gaze she bit her lip and uttered a low laugh, less silvery than before. "Oh—that? It's Matthew Steele."

"Matthew Steele?"

"Yes; but why this—'amaze,' as we say in novels?"

"*We?*"

"Of course, we! I tell you it must always be we. Surely you wouldn't—"

Lloyd shrugged. "You talk in riddles. If I hadn't a certain dim suspicion, based on gossip—"

"Gossip!" she exclaimed, in dismay.

"Yes; but tell me why is Steele so changed?"

"Oh, then you have seen him before?"

"Once."

Enoch, affected by a change in the publisher's appearance, too deep for immediate definition, glanced repeatedly between the portières. At first he ascribed the transformation merely to externals. "Has he not shaved off his mustache?"

She nodded. "I suggested that. It straggled."

"Yes, but the loose lips are worse still. They should not have been revealed."

"I confess it was a mistake," pouted Dolly; "but one never can tell in these experiments."

Lloyd saw Steele raise the stump of a forefinger and beckon to him gravely.

"Will you excuse me a minute? I think—"

"I wouldn't," she objected, lightly. "Don't go. He

casts a gloom over one's spirits. Besides, he's becoming dissipated—an absintheur. Imagine it—Matthew Steele! Now I do like the bizarre occasionally, but when people go too far, oh, how I long for the country and simple, clean natures—fresh air!"

Lloyd turned, smiling quizzically. "Do you? Really, you are a remarkable enigma, aren't you? From what O'Brien tells me—"

"Oh, Gol's all right," she interposed, foreseeing trouble ahead; "but other people say all kinds of things that aren't true. This is the penalty of being known."

His gaze became narrowly penetrating. "Do you suppose any one comes near guessing the real truth? By that I mean the *whole* truth."

"S-sh! I beg of you. Do you think—"

"I never know nowadays what I think."

"Absinthe?"

"A kind of absinthe."

"A kind?"

"In results—yes."

"Come, come; you have the manner of a misanthrope. Do you affect it like the rest? I had not thought—but here, let me introduce you to some one who will be more successful than I. See how bright-looking she is. She had a picture, they say, in last year's Salon."

Her majesty led him over to a young girl, pretty, but utterly vapid and insignificant contrasted with herself. She wished him to appreciate the difference between a poppy and a pink. Nor was he long in unconsciously feeling the loss of a personality. But presently another personality reasserted itself. He saw Steele beckoning to him again. This time he went to the dining-room.

Matthew was seated near a sideboard, to which now and then he would reach up for a small decanter containing an opaque and greenish liquid, easily recognizable as the distillation of wormwood.

The publisher held up his glass before Enoch's eyes. "It was she who taught me the trick, and the habit seems to have hit me—hard."

"Good God—*you!*"

"Yes; think of it—a man of business, cool-headed, an American through and through. Funny, is it not?" But his eyes, their china-like surface now changed to a shifting, almost blear, weakness, seemed scarcely in accord with the humor of the situation. "Oh, of course I'll throw it off soon, and her, too, if the business begins to go wrong, which I have an idea it will pretty shortly. But, Lloyd, I want to warn you against that woman. You may not have my stability. She'd lead you wrong—straight to hell. Once I asked her to marry me. At last she consented. Then she put it off, and now I wouldn't ask her again for a million. You'll never understand her. I don't. She's queer. There aren't many of this kind over here. She's different. And she's different from most of them anywhere. The point is, she's irreproachable. That's the worst of it. That's her strength. But in other ways she's wrong somehow—yes, *different!* She's a woman of the old world, as she says herself. Lord! she declared one day I was too cold-blooded, too commercial, but now she assures me I'm transfigured." He sipped his absinthe, craning his neck now and then to make sure the subject of his colloquy was still in the drawing-room. "Would you call it that?"

Enoch's forehead grew damp as he looked down at the man. Into his eloquent blue eyes there came a strange, bewildered expression, which a keen observer might almost have interpreted as denoting a vaguely troubled feeling of remorse and responsibility. "When did she first—" he began, then paused.

Steele smiled. "Oh, it was in gratitude to me for making her famous. Eh, what did you say?"

"I don't know." Lloyd lowered his voice. "Look here, Steele, she is not—" He hesitated; unfortunately for one moment he hesitated. His life in the past six months had perhaps rendered possible that momentary vacillation. In earlier days the truth would have been spontaneous.

"What are you two whispering about? You look like stage conspirators." The voice was Dolly's. She stood in the doorway, a hand on each portière.

"I must be going," said Lloyd, brusquely; but her position seemed to bar the way.

"Oh no; it's an unwritten law in my—ahem—salon, we call it, that none shall go without first breaking bread. It's a kind of condition of bon camaraderie, you know." Turning to the drawing-room she added, impudently: "You all observe the supper law, don't you?"

Goliath laughed aloud. The lions looked as hurt and crestfallen as the lambs.

But the supper, and particularly its nectareal accessory, frappé and sparkling, soon made up for the offence.

While the various delicacies and the wine were being passed in the drawing-room, by a slender young Creole who did service as Dolly's maid, Matthew Steele approached his hostess gravely. "Well," he began, urging her aside, "you have met him."

"What of that?"

He straightened up in an effort to regain that cold, business-like masterfulness which seemed so fast to be forsaking him. "I ask you now, once for all, to marry me."

"Marry you?"

"Yes. You speak as if you hadn't already promised."

"Marry you, once for all?"

"Yes."

"But it was not you who brought him, and, besides,

I may as well tell you he will come often." Again that tantalizing laughter, familiar to his ears as a popular air; then, seriously, "Moreover, at present you are hardly inviting as a husband. Instead of helping me up in life, you would drag me down."

Steele's face went ugly with anger. "You say that!" he ejaculated—"you who are the cause of it! What are you? A woman? No; I believe you are a she—" He broke off, laughing.

Her lip curled; her eyes were slits; but she managed to control her temper. "And what are *you?*" she asked, sarcastically. "When you're a man again you can come and remind me of my promise." Whereupon, without another word, Dolly slipped out to seek the idol of her whim.

On the way she met Goliath, and spoke to him aside. "I want to thank you for mentioning the Washington Hotel to Mr. Lloyd. It was only a matter of business, you know. The fact is, I have a financial interest in it. How good it was of you to bring him this evening!"

O'Brien smiled good-naturedly, and, when she left him, gravitated towards the basis of supply. He was far too lax, too sprawling of character, to consider the matter at all.

Dolly joined Enoch. "Come away from them—here. I must speak to you." She parted a Japanese hanging of beaded cane-work that screened a small anteroom when the door stood open. As Enoch entered he saw, to his surprise, a carved prie-dieu, antique and foreign, over which hung a silver crucifix. The sight shocked him. "Oh," said Dolly, in a hushed voice, "this is the only place available. I call it my sanctuary. You see, I am by no means a heathen. But don't let's even mention religion, with those people chattering out there." She motioned to an arm-chair opposite a tile-framed fire-

place, in which a bed of soft coals was glowing, and seated herself on a divan against the wall.

Lloyd sat down with an air of calm resource. As he did so, Félice, the maid, entered, bearing a tray with supper and a bottle of champagne. This she was about to deposit on the prie-dieu, when Dolly indignantly stopped her. "Félice, not there! Put it on the table. Have you no reverence in your nature?"

When the maid had dejectedly retired, Enoch sat forward. "Well?" he began.

Dolly glanced abstractedly through the cane hanging at the drawing-room. "Sometimes I hate them all; they stifle me. What has Mr. Steele been saying to you?"

"Nothing very pleasant."

"Do you mean about me?"

"Yes, about you."

She appeared to shiver—whether from a fear real or assumed Enoch could not determine. "I don't know what he will do next. He grows almost creepy. The fact is"—she lowered her lashes—"he warns people against me from sheer jealousy—a most extraordinary wile."

"Then why do you receive him here and give him absinthe?"

Her eyes snapped. Something disagreeable stole into their depths, something dangerous. "Your tone is unpardonable," she flashed, hotly; "but perhaps you, also, have been drinking. Do you know why I let him have it here? It's simply because I can restrict him with it." Her voice fell to a deeper note, her expression suggesting a truly devotional use of the prie-dieu. "Merciful Heaven, how I've tried to save that man!" Then, quickly, "It may be selfish, I know. You see, Mr. Steele is my publisher."

"Yours?"

"Well *ours*, if you prefer it." She leaned forward

over the table. "What's the use of innuendoes? I know you are pot-boiling under the name of Dolly Cohen, and you know it, though why on earth you should have chosen such a name I can't imagine. Why did you?"

He started back. "I—Dolly Cohen? Are you mad? Is this another piece of nonsense?"

She clapped her hands. "Excellent! Splendid! You should go on the stage. Oh, look here, what's the use of denying it?" She stretched still farther forward on one elbow, and reaching out an arm incisively tapped the table close to him with a delicate forefinger. "You may as well own up. It will be better all around. Perhaps you consider me very daring. So I am. Think of it! This is the position: You choose a pseudonym under which to write certain money-making trash that you would rather die than openly acknowledge. Suddenly, by a stroke of good-fortune, I learn the truth—no matter how. That's neither here nor there. The fact remains. Well, I need the money; I crave position; I am desperate! So what do I do? I adopt your pen-name, as though it were my own by birth. I steal your royalties; I strut in borrowed plumes. And you, of course, must let it go at that. How can you expose me without also betraying your own degradation? Oh, là-là-là, was ever such a thing before? I am, you might say, your second self. Dramatic, isn't it? Yes, you have created me, and it's not such a poor piece of work, after all. But I do wish you had chosen a prettier name. This is detestable. Dolly Cohen—pah! My true name is Céleste Mor— No, no; never mind. Céleste is enough; the second I've forgotten. Anyway, they're both done with now. Dolly Cohen—ugh!" She frowned at the champagne bottle.

Meanwhile Lloyd was laughing quietly. "One might call this talk a meaningless rigmarole, comprehensible only to walruses and snarks."

She nodded, with keen acumen. "Yes, yes; one *might*, but you *don't!* You understand well enough. That's positive. There can be no mistake. Can there? Is it possible I am wrong?" For an instant she bent her gaze on his face sharply, as if determined to read him through and through; then, of a sudden, she buried her face in her arms outstretched on the table, and when at last she looked up it was to dash away a tear. "Well, well; I'll say no more about it. Do as you will; play Lord High Executioner if you like; deprive me of my fame; send me back to the state of an impecunious nonentity. That's what I was—and very desperate. Oh, terribly! So I took big chances. None could have been greater. Well and good; the game has been exciting, and risk is the spice of life. I throw down my hand. You've won. That's the end of it." She filled two glasses recklessly. "Here, drink—drink deep to the game—and your victory—and my nerve. At least you will acknowledge I have nerve."

Enoch said nothing. At the last she had expressed his thoughts. What daring she had! What amazing courage! Her pose and the poise of her head and the flash of her eyes told him so, even if nothing else proclaimed it. Her pluck corresponded in a way to that headlong disregard for consequences which had until lately animated his life. And because at present he had cause to be timid, this dash of bravery appealed to him the more. Nothing is so fascinating to the newly cautious as the audacity they have lost.

Dolly sprang to her feet. "Drink!" She held the glass high into the light. "Champagne!" she cried. "What is it? What is a glass of champagne?" She paused as if for an adequate definition. The wine trembled at the brim. "Ah," she cried, at last, "I know!" Then, as though with a sudden outburst of eloquence, "A glass of champagne is a liquescent topaz—the only

jewel that we drink. Listen! It whispers to me. What does it say?" She lowered the glass and turned an ear to it. "Hark! It whispers, 'I am the spirit of Paris, the pseudo-soul. I am the ghost of the sunshine that dies on the fields at dusk.'" She sank to her seat and held the glass out, waiting to touch his own. "Poetic, am I not?" Then it occurred to her that she might as well be descended from Jean Jacques himself as from his ignominious protégé — from Jean Jacques, by the left hand. "Do you know I am descended—really, I'm not joking — from the great Rousseau — not according to convention, it's true, but informally, you know. Yes, there seems excellent reason for believing the story. Now, surely, you'll drink to me. I am the spirit of Paris." Her lashes fluttered.

His hand moved forward to the stem of his glass.

She gave him the subtlest gaze of her eyes. Deep down in their shadows glimmered a vaguely disturbing light—the light of invitation. They were far from smiling; nevertheless, the spark seemed to promise a smile, as a smile may promise a laugh. The look was luminous, intimate, veiled, sympathetic, as if it would say, "We have something in accord, you and I. We could understand each other." And the look was flattering. "I could appreciate you," it seemed to say. And tender, "I could love you." And passionate, "Youth, come to me; bring flame to flame!" And yet it was open, free, humorous, "We could laugh together, you and I." All this in a single glance, a single instant.

Lloyd started to rise hastily.

"No," she cried, in dismay, stretching out a hand to detain him. "There! That is the same instinct. Why do you turn? Why did you turn away that evening, two years ago? I must know. Tell me."

"When I look into your eyes," he replied, sinking back, "I am like a child afraid of the dark."

Her pupils dilated, sparkling. "Bravo, bravissimo! Well spoken! Do what you will now. Nothing matters." She urged him with a trembling glass. "Here's to the game."

"Yes, the game," he whispered.

Reaching forward she stroked his hand. "What a child you are! And I was once—God save me!"

The chivalry leaped up in him. "Don't!" he said; "don't! What's wrong?"

She fell to her knees beside him. "I am not worthy," she half sobbed, "even to touch your fingers."

"Well," exclaimed a voice from between the portières, "that's pretty!"

Dolly sprang back. Lloyd rose to his feet. Steele stood in the doorway. Swaying unsteadily, he held out a hand to Enoch. "'Night, Mr. Angel; 'night."

Lloyd shook the hand and recoiled. He remembered having grasped it once before. Then it had been cold, like marble; now it was cold, like a damp, flexible substance—inexpressibly unpleasant. And the impression created by the tone with which he said "Angel" was even worse.

Steele regarded Enoch with a smile annoyingly familiar. "Well, my Lor' Shanshellor, she is wonderful, isn't she—wonderful queen? Do you know what her majesty calls me now?" Dolly laughed nervously. "She calls me the March Hare." At this he smiled as if mocking himself, and, with a bow, went off mumbling his sobriquet.

Lloyd, still feeling the touch of the gelatinous hand in his, stood for a moment irresolute. But gradually the damp contact seemed to go deeper. It brought a chill, almost physical, through the veins from palm to heart. Sweeping back the hair from his temple, he stood straighter than before. "I am going."

Dolly rose without demur, and lightly offered him her

hand. "Well, after all, I was not repellent to you that evening."

His answer came frankly unsparing. "Yes, I think you were—*are!*"

"I—repellent!" Her eyes narrowed, then she laughed. "Oh, well, what do I care? It doesn't matter—if only you don't—you don't—"

"What?"

"Betray me."

He faced her squarely. "That is exactly what I intend to do."

"You do—you intend—" Her eyes threatened him.

"Yes," he declared, tersely. "Now I know you are defrauding some one. Even your name's a sham."

"Ah! And how about yours?" Her manner was no longer winning, no longer brave. Her voice had a vituperative harshness. "Some one, indeed! Do you think I don't know who that some one is? Ta bouche, bébé! Tu es sot!" The nails of her fingers were biting into her palms. The girl of the quais and alleys, the fiery grisette of the Quarter, never wholly to be annihilated, rose to the surface with vulgar invective and surprised him into fear.

Nevertheless, he kept a bold front. "It can be done," he reiterated, firmly.

"How? Pray tell me how?"

"Well, suppose I know the person who has really written these novels? Suppose I prevail upon her to stop writing them? Since you stole the name no book by Dolly Cohen has appeared. Now suppose, merely for argument's sake, the manuscript of another is just completed. Steele, we'll say, expects it. The manuscript doesn't come. Days go by. He demands from you—*you*, of course—another novel. You can't comply. He presses. You put him off. He wonders; he suspects;

he grasps the truth. You are ruined! Isn't it so? What do you answer to this?"

Dolly snapped her fingers. "That's what I answer. Pah! Do you know what it means when I snap my fingers? Oh, my poor boy, it means a great deal. In this instance it signifies that you are utterly powerless in the matter, and that it is impossible for you to fool me with talk of *her*, because I know positively that Enoch Lloyd is Dolly Cohen, and I can prove it beyond the shadow of a doubt. My misgivings a moment ago were only a pretence. It is so nice to cry now and then when there's nothing to cry for; so pretty if you dash the tears from your eyes." She shrugged indifferently. "You see, I'm showing you my true self. It's better. I'm not afraid of you one little bit. You'll come again, of course! Why don't you come on Monday? That's my birthday. I'm to have a party, like a girl of ten. Oh yes, you'll come. I'm not afraid of you in the very least. That's what it means when I snap my fingers. It means I am laughing in my sleeve." She stroked her velvet-clad arms fondlingly. "Well, how about it?"

"Good-night," said Lloyd, in a hard voice, and turned on his heel slowly. Through the drawing-room he walked away in a fit of abstraction, as if without feeling the inquisitive eyes that watched his exit.

Dolly followed to the hall. "Good-night, my Lord High Executioner," she waved, gayly, before her entire court. "Good-night, my Lord No-name. Come again."

VI

Afterthoughts

AS Lloyd went out into the night he threw back his head to inhale deep the cold, invigorating air. Snow had been falling since noon. About each white globe under which he passed a miniature Milky Way of flakes, soft as thistle-down, dispersed the arc rays into a myriad chips of light. On the pavement the long white reaches, like cotton-batting, muffled sounds. Lloyd noticed that his steps were inaudible, even to himself. The realization appeared to have an influence out of all proportion to the fact. He would have preferred to hear his footfalls. Nerves keyed high seem to need vibration. He listened now with unprecedented eagerness to the occasional noises of night-time — the rumble of cabs, the heavy passing of an automobile, the song of a tipsy collegian, the clatter of an elevated train, and next its shriek as brakes were put on and wheels squeaked along the rail at a station overhead. All these his ears caught at with relief, but often came intervals of silence, save for the bruit of his own mind.

He hurried on, and his brain, when actual noises were lacking to distract it, seemed not only to give forth sound, but shape as well. One after another intangible forms, dissolving, commingling, and incoherent as the clamor, obscured his mental vision, rendering the prospect of life so chaotic that at last it bred a hopeless, helpless fatigue, similar to that which follows nightmare.

Now and again the passing of an electric-car, ablaze

with light, dispelled for a moment the effect of lifelessness.

He hurried on, the usual swing of his stride broken by uneasy haste. His gait betrayed the nervous celerity of a fugitive from thoughts. Leaving Broadway, he turned into Fifth Avenue at the junction of the two thoroughfares, and further quickened his pace. Here not even a car relieved the dreariness of his way.

He hurried on. Finally the great arch loomed big before him, white as though built of snow. He hastened under it. The square was a white waste. Its trees, lank and stark, waved skeleton arms at the pale arc moon. Lloyd was alone in the open. He struck across the waste. His track was deep and direct. It ended at the Washington Hotel.

Mounting speedily to his room, he lighted the gas and sighed with a sense of refuge, but even here rest was lacking. He found two letters awaiting him. The first was from Cuthbert Morton.

"Dear Angel,—"

Lloyd smiled at the name, the pitiful smile of irony embittering the eyes of youth.

"Dear Angel,—At the Millennium Club last night extracts from your book, *The Greatest Good*, were read aloud. They met with deep approval. This recognition by men who have the best ideals of literature and life at heart is worth having. Mr. Lee wants to propose you for membership. If you agree, I will second you. Yours,

"C. M."

Lloyd stared blankly at the damp-stained wall, much as an impatient traveller stares at a cross-road that suddenly complicates his course. Dropping the note, he frowned. Cuthbert was always heaping coals of fire on his head. Never had there been a quarrel but what

Cuthbert had patronized him into peace. And yet, Cutty somehow meant well.

He took up the second letter, and, holding it under the gas-jet, read intently:

"DEAR MR. LLOYD,—After trying for six months, I have at last discovered your address through Mr. Morton. We are in town for the winter in our home. I must see you. Come at once. MARION LEE."

Unfortunately he dwelt on the last sentence. Its imperious tone rankled. His mood was pettily on the lookout for annoyances. With an air of defiance he tore the letter into scraps and tossed it aside.

In bewilderment he went to his window, and, raising the sash, looked out as if the confines of his room had become unbearable.

The bells of Grace Church, within range of his hearing, had already chimed three o'clock in the morning.

The square was no longer empty. Dim in one of the bordering streets two or three figures bent in toil were busily clearing a driveway. Enoch envied the men their unreasoning labor. To them the best things in life were a job and the food it brought; the worst were the lack of a job and an empty stomach. At least they knew what they wanted, and were fairly content with what they got. How much simpler to call existence a job than an infinite enigma. They were blessed by the blindness of drudgery.

As he stood there a wagon laden with newspapers, horse at a gallop, rattled into the light and off westward, probably to the North River ferries, its course one of the numberless radii diverging from the centre of news—the light of events—to the outermost circle of readers. The indomitable energy and bigness of modern enterprise seemed to shame his life.

Presently another vehicle appeared while Enoch watch-

ed. An ambulance, evidently returning to hospital from the scene of an accident, passed slowly beneath him. The street light revealed a blanketed figure's lower extremities, whether of a person dead or alive it was impossible to tell. Lloyd glanced at the hospital interne on the foot-board. His lot, too, was enviable. What better than to be driven about here, there, and everywhere, with duty defined, helping people, thinking little of the morrow, so easily, so simply doing good? Even in closing the eyes of a dead man there is duty—real life! Enoch failed to consider the years of the young doctor's preparation, the wearing study, the wonderful intricacies of anatomy he had been obliged to master, and the revolting details of pathology before being allowed even to wrap a bandage on a drunkard's wound.

Long after the ambulance had passed from view Enoch stood there. The snow was no longer falling. The number of figures had increased. Near the end of the block a policeman was trying the doors to make certain they were locked. Here, too, was service—guardianship against evil, a definite post to fill. Anything seemed preferable to negation, to all this complex wondering, this ceaseless, harassing question, "Is it worth while?" He began to long for the genuine, healthy fatigue of real toil . . . or else a forgetful passivity. . . .

As the policeman advanced, a female figure, tall and meagre, hovering near another corner, crouched into the shadows of an areaway and waited while he passed. Assured of safety, the outcast then emerged to continue her own wearisome beat. Under Lloyd's window she happened to pause with her back to the hotel, and hesitatingly regarded one of the snow-covered benches in the square, as if wavering between the coldness of its comfort and the rest it would afford. In her hat a couple of bedraggled black feathers drooped over her brow. Her skirt trailed in the snow. Presently the thought of the

rest prevailed. She crossed and seated herself. In a moment the feathers in her hat were bobbing forward. Evidently overcome with exhaustion, she had fallen asleep.

Enoch felt as though his nerves tightened. She was affording him a glimpse at the Tragic Side.

But soon along came a reeling workman, and the woman awoke. In a few minutes the two were walking away, and as they went she suddenly laughed aloud. Enoch saw the flamboyant, hearselike plumes in her hat begin to shake wildly. Harsh, riotous, discordant, her laughter rang out with a peal so ribald that in it all the evil of the world seemed to be mocking all the good. The laugh was the jeer of remorseless vice.

Lloyd closed the window. For a moment, while the actual sound of that laughter filled his ears, he stared down dazedly at the receding figures, and gradually, when the sound set fire to imagination, his thoughts began, in a confused way, to people the earth with mocking laughers like this woman, and, ruling over them all, a superhuman mocker, leading the chorus of their mirth. Then suddenly he straightened up, aggressive. Instinctively, for one instant, he had become a champion of virtue. But soon the psychical echoes of that laughter dissolved his zeal. Perhaps some note within him was out of tune and could only vibrate falsely. Be that as it may, he sank into a chair and smiled. Something in the tone of the outcast's merriment suggested strangely the laughter of another woman. Yet what a contrast between the two! This was harsh, that had been melodious; this was repellent, that had been seductive; this was evil, that— He paused. Did the antithesis end here? How desperately difficult to recognize the discords that seem to perfect a harmony! How different could one but play on human natures, striking their key-notes, then listening with an ear attuned!

Suddenly the bells of Grace Church chimed the last of the small hours—four o'clock in the morning.

Turning bewilderedly, he threw himself on the bed, dressed as he was, and, with the abandonment of a boy to some hidden trouble, buried his face in the pillow.

The woman who had been suggested by the harpy's laugh showed no such childlike emotion; and yet, when the last of the lions and lambs had departed, it soon became evident that their divinity was in no tranquil frame of mind.

"Is ma'm'selle not going to bed?" Félice stood waiting to perform the delicate operation of extricating her mistress from the white velvet gown.

"Unhook me."

"Ma'm'selle is vexed. Is it because I put the champagne on the prie-dieu?"

"Pah!"

"Ma'm'selle is not herself."

"No, she is some one else. That's the trouble."

"I do not understand."

"Of course you don't. You're not meant to."

"That is true—yes. But if ma'm'selle does not think me insolent, I suspect—"

"Well, what? Now, what?"

"I suspect she has been annoyed by the young gentleman with the clear blue eyes. Is he not different from the rest?"

"Foh! Down deep they are all the same. The color of the eyes doesn't matter much. Behind them one always finds the inveterate masculine. Do you know what that means?"

Félice shook her head and sighed with sincere admiration. "You read the world like a book, ma'm'selle, but *I* know so very little."

"It means," pursued Dolly, "a born fool. But of

course you don't know. That's why I engaged you. One can trust a know-nothing. Besides," she added, assuming an air of preciosity, "ignorance of your kind, Félice, is indeed an inestimable possession. Keep your heart simple and you may live with me always."

Félice struggled with the last hook. "Oh, thank you, ma'm'selle."

"But remember," pursued the Queen of Bohemia, who derived a certain pleasure from the ingenuousness of her lady-in-waiting, "you have a Southern nature, so keep in mind one thing. This has always been my father's advice to me, and he is very shrewd, so shrewd that he can laugh at life. 'Be unobtainable,' he told me when I was a child; 'always be unobtainable. Above everything, let others do the loving.'" Dolly laughed flippantly. "To this rule I've added one exception." She turned and surveyed her figure in the cheval-glass. "It gives me splendid leeway. 'Love yourself.' This is a sure safeguard against dangerous entanglements. Come, be quick!" She threw off her bodice. "There! Ah, it's good to be free of that prison." The velvet skirt fell softly to the floor. "Unlace me." When Félice had finished the task her mistress drew a long breath of relief. "This pair doesn't fit, somehow. You may wear them. Come, weigh me."

She followed her maid to the bath-room, and, according to her nightly custom, stood on a pair of white-and-gold scales, to make sure there was no beginning of grossness.

"Half a pound less," said Félice.

"Naturally," muttered Dolly. "I've been through so much." For once the question of avoirdupois was soon forgotten. Dolly returned to her dressing-table.

"Ma'm'selle, the milk is in the bath-tub."

"I'm not going to bathe to-night."

"Not—"

"No. Be quiet. Keep it over. Set it." She smiled whimsically. "Then to-morrow I can take a bath in cream."

Félice smiled too. Her mistress had so unexpected a way of saying things. "Is ma'm'selle ready to have her hair combed?"

"Yes, but look out for tangles. I believe I could murder you to-night for the theft of a single hair."

Félice fell tremblingly to work.

"Wait! Stop!"

"But, ma'm'selle, I was doing it so gently."

"Oh, it isn't that. Can I be wrong? Can I be wrong?" Jumping up, she hurried to the bureau, from a drawer of which she took out an envelope containing a minute scrap of paper. At the scrap she gazed for the hundredth time. "Can I be wrong? Why should he choose such—" She paused and bit her lip and fingered her hair and frowned at the name before her. Then, on a sudden, she uttered a little cry. Her eyes danced, and she burst out laughing uncontrollably.

Félice quaked. Never had she heard quite so startling a laugh before. It was enough to jangle on any one's nerves at four o'clock in the morning. Harsh, riotous, discordant, it rang out with a peal so ribald that in it all the evil in the world seemed to be mocking all the good.

Dolly, slipping back the scrap, returned to her dressing-table. "It's all right, Félice. It's all right now. I have it at last—and him."

"But, ma'm'selle," whispered her know-nothing, half between terror and bewilderment, "I don't understand."

"No matter, no matter. Comb my hair; put me to bed. I want to think it over in peace and comfort."

Dolly lay awake until finally the first hint of day, which, in spite of close-drawn blinds, would persist, now

and then, in finding a crevice of entrance, stole in to protest against her preference for lamp-light.

Annoyed, she pulled up the sheets, but now her sensitive conscience reminded her of neglected prayers. Stepping into her slippers she glided to the anteroom, screened by the Japanese hanging of beaded cane-work. Under a low, depending lamp she knelt at the prie-dieu and prettily offered thanksgiving. Then, slipping back through the drawing-room, she shut out the impudent daylight—so dear to the world, so detestable to custodians of night—and was soon snuggled in the fair linen, sleeping as soundly as a child.

VII

The Hour of Stephen Lee

"COME at once.—MARION LEE."

In his sleep the words were like a call, clear and deep, vital and commanding. The summons seemed to descend from somewhere above him, in the old, familiar, undying voice, ever echoing as though from her spirit—the voice of the soul of a violoncello, vibrantly memorial in tone. When he awoke they flared across his mental vision as though engrailed in air by some invisible finger. As the day passed he found it impossible to elude them. They held his gaze abstracted. Again and again his brain repeated her name in low, mechanical sing-song, till at last the far less mellow accents of his pride were drowned in the chant of memory.

No longer pettily cavilling, he obeyed.

The winter home of the Lees, in Fifth Avenue, not far from the marble arch, stood in a row of once-fashionable brownstone houses, whose massive, unornate solidity still proclaims the dignified reserve of a bygone generation.

It was late in the afternoon. The sun's rays, sloping lower and lower from the west, crossed the avenue at side streets. Between them the houses, casting blunt shadows, reared a barrier against the gloaming. Mile on mile stretched the fixed roof-line, a close, man-made horizon, denying the eye its right to the distances of twilight.

Lloyd, pausing on the first step, surveyed the dwelling. How unlike the House of Dreams! How sternly actual!

Could the presence even of Marion invest this house with enchantment? Here she was exiled from nature. Before, when he had seen her, how near to it she had seemed. Vivid recollections filled his mind. Scene after scene flashed back to him. There she stood on the shore, instinct with vitality; there again, near the majestic column, a goddess unnamable, descending to meet him at the steps of her temple; and there, once more, in his boat she lay asleep, passionate-haired, silver-faced, unknowable. If only she had wakened to him then and yielded even a little, how different it would all have been! If only now she would do so it might not be too late. If only now she would do so he would never again grow desperate. He loved her. Yes, his love was himself. Like the big life in him, it was now pent up, choked back. In a moment he would be wearing the mask of indifference so often mentally assumed in rehearsals of their next meeting.

Slowly he mounted the steps and pulled the bell. It was answered by a familiar figure. Failing at first to recognize Lloyd in the gathering dusk, Timothy stood waiting with tray held forward for a card.

Enoch almost recoiled. The long black sleeve and thin hand suggested something hauntingly unpleasant. While he fumbled in his pockets his thoughts were groping about to grasp the meaning of that arm. Yes, he remembered now. From his peculiarly sensitive mental retina even the trivial accessories of a crucial moment were seldom obliterated. Time and again they flashed forth to mirror the past in the present. Yes, he remembered now. This very same hand had held out the two letters that had changed the look of his life. He saw it stuck in at his cabin door first with Mr. Lee's announcement of failure, then with Marion's curt goodbye.

"Won't you step in, sir?"

The impassive voice recalled him to himself. "Yes. How are you, Timothy?"

"Mr. Lloyd! Why, sir, I didn't know you. Maybe it's gone to the eyes." He helped Enoch off with his coat.

"What's gone?"

"The sciatica, sir. It goes everywhere — leastwise comes."

Lloyd glanced at his mask of cold formality, visible in the hat-rack mirror. "But not to the eyes."

Timothy shook his head despondently. "You never can tell. I've heard some say as how it hurt their immortal souls, it's that wicked, sir. I call it the wickedest of ailments."

"But not to the eyes," repeated Lloyd, vaguely remembering that eyes had something to do with the subject.

"Why not, sir?" despaired the victim of the wickedest ailment. "It 'll go wherever it can, and the eyes is easy to get at."

Lloyd laughed, averting his own from the mirror. "True enough, too easy. Shall I go in here?"

"No, if you please. Miss Lee's above, in the library. She said I should show you up."

Enoch started for the stairs, the old man-servant painfully limping behind him. "It dotes on stairs," ventured Timothy, wrinkling with obvious wile.

"What does?"

"Sciatica, sir."

Enoch smiled at the ancient sly-dog "You need not come up."

"Thank you, Mr. Lloyd. The first door on the left, sir—if you'll excuse me."

With an air of casual nonchalance, in perfect accord with his mask, Enoch ascended the heavily carpeted stairway. At the door on the left he paused. It was

wide open. Already the darkness of evening had gathered in the library. Nothing save the light of a wide wood fire opposite the doorway and the gas-jet in the hall illuminated the interior. Facing the fire stood a low leather arm-chair, just above the back of which a golden glimmer, softly suffusive, revealed her identity. By her side stood a massive round table covered with books — books open as though she had been reading, books closed and lying at random as if, after a moment with each, she had ruthlessly tossed it from her.

He wondered if thoughts of him had rendered reading impossible. Did she ever regret the sending of that heartless letter? Perhaps, if some day she were to know the results of it, she would feel sorry. If only she could realize that under the surface nothing in the world meant much to him nowadays except his longing for her, possibly she would at least be kind. Why was he doomed to take things so seriously? Why was he so primeval in his feelings? It seemed hard that he should have so much capacity for bigness in life and love and action, and yet must choke it back and try to be coldly modern, prosaic, tame. Yes, he was living centuries too late. Even now, when the folly, the wild insanities of boyhood had been knocked out of him, this assertion remained. He was too elemental for the life of to-day.

"Oh, Marion!"

He started forward. He had spoken her name aloud. Involuntarily it had burst from him.

She stood up and turned, blushing crimson.

Who knows but what then, after that first moment of silence, the courses of their lives might have suddenly turned. Surprises are the coups of love.

But, as chance would have it, the door of the adjoining room opened, and they stood apart helplessly embarrassed. Their faces fell.

"Hum-m! one might think you two were a couple of

owls." Mr. Lee, who had paused on the threshold, advanced to the hearth and turned with hands behind him, waggling his coat-tails to the blaze in a perfect flurry of good-humor. "A couple of moping owls." He glanced quizzically up at Enoch. "I'm waiting to hear you hoot."

Instantly Enoch's face brightened with laughter, and Marion, warming into life, affectionately kissed her father.

"There, there," beamed the little old gentleman, "that's better! Mr. Lloyd, it cheers the cockles of my heart to see you. Come, draw up chairs. No, thanks; I'll take my own." He did so, and, joining his finger-tips, gazed over them into the fire. "Now for a chat. Marion tells me this hour is always to be my own. There's nothing better after the day is done—nothing so dear to me." The finger-tips now and then parted, and lightly touched again with the mild uncertainty of age. "Nothing so kind. What, my Marion, no tea? The kettle is usually boiling over by now. We've lost time. What is it they say?

> "If the water boiling be,
> Seven minutes to make the tea."

Leaning forward, he turned and bent his gaze on a far corner of the room, where stood a small table holding a silver tray with cups and saucers, kettle and teapot, and various accessories of the brew. "Dear me," said he, with a knowing twinkle, "the wick isn't even lighted. So we've lost just seven minutes of the hour that's my very own." Settling back with a blink of mischief, he nodded at the blaze.

Marion nastened to the tea-table.

"Let me help you," said Enoch, following her.

Thus were the seven minutes of the rhyme stolen from their rightful owner.

While the little old gentleman exchanged cheerful

beams with the fire, and proved how precise he could be in touching the finger-tips of one hand to the tips of the fingers of the other, the tall silver kettle began to sputter at its two attendants, as if disputing the right of any other heart save its own to bubble with happiness.

The hum of the officiating couple was constantly broken by the delicate affairs of brewing. "I'm so sorry," said the priestess of the urn, at work with capable, sure fingers, "but our letters — no, no; don't do that. We must scald it first. There! Now you may— our letters crossed. Mine was not an answer. (Yes, that's right, four teaspoonfuls.) How could you have thought me so hard? (Look! What have you done? You've put the tea in the kettle! S-sh, never mind. Four more in here.) And I wanted so much to find you. It was all a mistake. If I had received your letter— yes, bring the table to the fire — I would never have written as I did. Of course, we must be friends."

Lloyd started towards her. "Do you mean—" But as the cups and saucers on the table he was holding loudly rattled a warning, he could only stand still and be sputtered at by the vociferous spout of the kettle. "Oh, Marion, Marion!"

She laughed gayly at his discomfiture.

"Seven!" chirruped Mr. Lee, making believe he had been counting the minutes. "Do I not hear it boiling? Time's up. This is my hour, you know. Maid Marion always says so."

The procession of the tea was quickly over.

"There; now leave it," said Mr. Lee, "and let it brew. Well, Lloyd, I'm glad you've turned up at last. I wrote you a letter last month, but I didn't know where to send it, you've been such a recluse lately. *The Greatest Good* has just been published in England."

Enoch started. "In England?"

"Yes, but don't get your hopes up, though, of course, it is slightly encouraging to you."

Enoch said nothing. Again he was at a cross-road that baffled his calculations.

"Now, tell me," continued the publisher, with interest, "what book next from your fertile brain? *The Greatest Good* must be followed by another. It's only right. That book was a kind of promise to the world—a sacred promise of better things. Of course, you will keep your word. Your second must be a fulfilment. But here; how about the tea? Try it, Marion."

When the priestess of the urn had recourse to the teapot, she darted a glance of misgiving at the genie of that particular vessel. The teapot felt so light, and Mr. Lee was waiting with interest to note the color of the concoction that should presently appear. Slowly she inclined the spout, so far that at last it was hidden in the cup. Her father leaned forward, staring. The cup was empty. Not a drop. The evil genie of the teapot was already shaking with silent mirth.

"What in the world," began Mr. Lee—"what in the world—"

"Oh," laughed Marion, in flushed embarrassment, "we must have forgotten the water!"

Her father nodded. "That is a plausible solution." He peered down at the dry leaves. "That, in fact, is the only *solution* I can at present perceive." Tickled by the pun, he cocked an indulgent eye at Marion, under a frown.

Thus, beginning with a pretty misadventure, the trio set out for a ramble that led them, as once before in the House of Dreams, to the pleasant by-paths of conversation. And the presence of Age held Youth to the way, with fair success, considering Youth's propensity for mad essays into the wilds around them.

Almost, Lloyd was at heart content. Again by mere-

ly being their own true selves these two had won him to them. Before the fire, the heavy round table between them, sat Enoch and Stephen Lee, Marion at her father's feet on the hearth-rug. Naturally this large, old room, unspeakably restful in the firelight, could harbor little disquiet. Who enters here, it seemed to say, leaves the turmoil of life behind him. Indeed, the library, aglow with beams from the grate, and yet so peaceful, breathed the very spirit of its master. The gentle philosopher was everywhere apparent. Between the windows and beside the fireplace low lines of shelves were surmounted by a row of flower-pots in which grew his favorite old-fashioned flowers, catching at present the fire's glimmer and proclaiming themselves his children by a hundred happy points of resemblance. Below them, row under row to the floor, a number of his books in faded, unostentatious bindings lined the shelves. Evading the careless eye, yet inviting the gaze of their lovers, these were no such heavy, ponderous tomes as those of the ancestral homestead. They belonged to a far more genial generation.

From his arm-chair at one end of the hearth-rug Lloyd's glance, passing Mr. Lee, who sat at the other, was frequently drawn in their direction.

The little old publisher recognized the glance. It was the spirit of book-love deep in this look that he had lived to inspire in thousands of readers. "Bring me the Spenser, dear—one volume. I hope we didn't leave them in Bristol. No? That's good." When Marion had brought him the book he held it out to Enoch. "Can you see it in the firelight? That's the first American edition."

Lloyd's gaze bent near to the title-page. "Yes, yes," he said, closing the treasure tenderly. "This is the volume you are holding in the portrait." He glanced up at the walls. "I see you haven't brought the picture to New York."

"No," said Mr. Lee; "it prefers the country."

Lloyd smiled. "So say we all of us. I should like to be there myself at this very moment."

He shot a look at Marion.

"We go back to Bristol in May," she announced, surveying the hearth-rug.

Enoch did not withdraw his gaze. His steps in the by-paths of conversation were soon halting. Gone were the books, the priceless first edition, all those treasures in thought and value. Slowly they faded from his mind. Deaf were his ears to the homilies of the gentle philosopher. Only Marion's face was vivid to his sight—the face of the sea-deep, dew-gray eyes, the noble brow and the flame above, corona-like, beneficent. Only her voice —the voice of the violoncello—was actual to his hearing.

At last, with a quick uplift of her lashes, Marion dumbly protested. The look said as eloquently as though her heart had spoken, "Don't, don't! I ask you. Isn't it enough if we are friends? Don't, or—" The last suggestion of her eyes being emphasized by a stir and rustle, as though flight were imminent, freed her from his gaze, and the wilds were eschewed as too dangerous for exploration.

"Father, we must show Mr. Lloyd the new illuminated Shelley."

And so passed the hour of Mr. Lee, the hour between the day and the night of his life. So passed the hour of Mr. Lee, and he smiled at its gentle going. Over his tea-cup he beamed at them with many a harmless jest and quaint dissertation, till at last the fire fell in with a crash and the temporary passing of Lloyd was in order.

"Good-night, Miss Lee; I must be going." He smiled with free earnestness into her bashful eyes. "Good-night, Mr. Lee; I trust you will let me come here often Somehow, I feel as though you were my good angel."

Marion, rising, bent close to her father's chubby, pink

cheek affectionately. "He should have said cherub," she dared to whisper in the paternal ear, and, looking up, her eyes bade Lloyd a very good evening. Which it was, and better within him than any other for many a moon, thanks to this hour of its coming.

The last that Enoch saw, as he turned on leaving the room, was the little old gentleman in his arm-chair, his head bowed slightly forward, and Marion's eyes, limpid and gray as the morning dew, deep as the sea, wistfully saying good-bye over her father's shoulder.

Enoch went home through the cool night air as though on wings. Only once he stopped, and then suddenly. Dolly Cohen, his second self, his own creation —what of her? Thank God, *her* hour had passed that evening!

Walking on, with a sudden return to gayety, "Eat, drink, and be merry," he confidently warned her, "for to-morrow you die."

VIII

The Supreme Court

MARCH, vicious as a rabid dog, still ran amuck in the city. Through Sunday night a gale rushed howling from river to river. On Monday morning the brute died. Snow fell, and, at noon, rain. The streets were foul with slush.

Lloyd looked up at the sky. It appeared so leaden as to suggest a permanent grayness. His face for the moment expressed a similar condition. Huddled at his desk as though the chill penetrated to his marrow, he was reading the latest manuscript of Dolly Cohen. Although he had unequivocally doomed it to destruction, and, as a consequence, her as well, something within him stayed him from punishing his lower self without first arraigning the prisoner. Lower selves, when caught, have a trick of demanding trial, thanks to the advice of their resourceful counsel. Delay is the last device of the devil's advocate. He thrives on procrastination. While there's a chance he quibbles with justice, fawns on the judge, and invokes the aid of heaven in the interests of hell. A perfect master of demagogics, this doctor of Satanic law possesses an eminent genius for chicane. He is, in short, in the slang of the legal fraternity, a shyster. The devil's advocate is the father of shysters.

Though the sentence in the present case had already been pronounced, this incorrigible D.S.L. up and pled for pardon on the ground of an extenuating circumstance. So persistently is the lower self defended.

Lloyd skimmed through the typewritten manuscript. What easy work this had been! How mechanical! There was no denying that many could have done it better than himself. For every genius a thousand hacks are born. Nevertheless, he had accomplished one thing: by hook or crook he had grasped that which on a certain night had seemed so desperately impossible. Success? Yes, in a way, success. Imagination so often degenerates into ingenuity, the facile into the prolific, the one genius into one of the thousand hacks, and the sham succeeds! He could not even color the dismal fact by telling himself that there was something unusual in this, something exceptional, merely because his work happened to be creative and literary. Many a statesman had succumbed to politics, many a philosopher to cynicism, many a saint to hypocrisy. Of course the shirking of that responsibility always profoundly incumbent on a creative spirit rendered him, in a sense, more blamable than those who avoid less exalted duties. But the degree of wrong is wholly relative, and his present lapse, looked at from the stand-point of his genius, seemed far too intricate for analysis to his mind in its present state. He had not even the consolation of considering his case as above and apart from that of other shirkers. Even the questionable refuge of lofty though regretful contemplation was denied him. To put it plainly, he was like any one else who surrenders at the first defeat. Were they not all authors? Was not every man and woman on earth an author—an author of deeds, words, influences—each life a volume tending to ennoble or degrade a circle of readers in the great free library of mankind?

But was there no middle course—average industry, neither of high ideals nor low? As the stream of these perplexities flowed on like a troubled undercurrent, it seemed in this last question to meet a rock or dam of the mind and grew clamorously insistent. Lloyd fell to

thinking of the first book he had written after *The Greatest Good*. Vividly he recalled the moment in which his pseudonym had suggested itself. How base and sordid the name had sounded! How grotesquely and diametrically opposed to his own! Nevertheless, it was Fate—yes, Fate, whispered the devil's advocate with dramatic intensity; it was Fate that had prompted the selection. The name, suggested by the discovery of a fact incredibly startling, had not been arbitrarily chosen. It had existed from the very beginning. Granted, then, that the prisoner had attempted to annihilate the author of *The Greatest Good*. The crime had never been premeditated. Evidently he had known a moment of intense bitterness and disappointment, the disappointment not only of failure in literature but in the strongest of human passions—love. Despair had darkened his brain. At such a moment the mind is scarcely to be held responsible. Then suddenly this name had been thrust upon him by a laughing, malevolent, superhuman agency. And he, wildly laughing too, had assumed the name as an alias, and in that moment of desperation had attempted the life of his highest self. Since then, borne down by this name, and fitting his work to his conception of the flippant, sordid character its sound implied, he had naturally degenerated.

The doctor of Satanic law here pausing, his opponent for the plaintiff quietly delivered himself in this wise: Fate goes just so far, no farther.. Its jurisdiction ceases at the borders of the heart. Into the heart it cannot enter unless admitted by the man himself. The shoulders of Fate already are bent with unmerited burdens. A man who is true bears the weight of his own misdeeds himself.

Thus, in that final Court of Appeals, the Supreme Court of the Soul, Lloyd sat upon his case.

His mind, though now made up, wearily entertained the

arguments. Confident of liberty in the worldly sense, he was struggling for an even more desirable freedom. He craved immunity from remorse. It was an ugly thing to think that he, Enoch Lloyd, the idealist, had debased himself. Until Saturday night he had been able to stifle that consciousness within him. Clicking away at his typewriting-machine day after day and night after night in deafening drudgery, he had had, at first, no ear for the inner whisper. Then later, when success and money had come, the spirit of pleasure-seeking had postponed this inevitable reckoning. Now, at last, nothing could delay it. By a strange freak of circumstance he had on Saturday night suddenly met the personification of his second self face to face. The pseudonym had shaped a living being. Dolly Cohen existed in flesh and blood! The wrong he had done lived in the world with him, actual as himself. He confronted an appalling conviction. What's in a name? So much, he thought, that even God Himself without some name would be to man no God at all. At the mention of this supreme appellation he recalled an incident of years ago. "It was Enoch, my lad, who 'walked with God.'" How aptly long-forgotten words return! It seemed a detestable trick of memory. Perhaps each saying like that has a far-distant psychological moment in which to aid in the making or the marring of a life. Possibly even beyond the grave it finds its mark. Was this the meaning of the one perfect Master of words—of Him whose words have inspired myriads of men—when He proclaimed the awfulness of language? Here was a paralyzing thought. Lloyd leaned back, staring at his manuscript. Yet surely his work was not evil. Certainly the *first* book written under his pen-name was lacking entirely in anything good or bad. Such words as those could have no effect on any one—he paused, startled—save, perhaps, himself. Might not their influence in a way be retroactive—the

fact that he had stooped from positive ideals to negative mediocrity? Cant and hackneyed phrases came bluntly to his mind. They have a certain force sometimes. He had "smothered the divine spark," had "not lived up to the best that was in him." As though to substantiate that which had just occurred to him concerning psychological moments and their one Master, a command of that Master returned to him now with telling power. "Hide not your light." Here was a decree succinct and vital as any in the Decalogue, and those of the Decalogue he "had kept from his youth up." What a medley of quotations! One old saw after another, hitherto regarded as obsolete, rushed with a new and personal efficacy to his mind. Yet, with the persistent self-defence of youth, he met each attack of these convictions with renewed vigor, till at last, being almost worsted, he pleaded guilty, and, after another custom common to such natures, said inwardly to the victorious enemy: "Now make the most of it. The thing is negative. There's no real harm been done, and besides it's now forever in the past." To this the arraigning voice contented itself with merely questioning his veracity. No harm? No harm? The question rankled. He knew well enough that one never drifts without going downward. His second book had not possessed quite the same mediocre innocence as the first. And the latest, now before him, never to be published—well, he could not have been commonplace long. His talent must find an outlet somewhere. It *would* tell, either for good or bad. The heart of genius is the half-way house between hell and heaven.

He glanced down into the street. In a few hours that pure white mantle of the morning had been turned to filth. Here was a sombre simile: Heaven sent purity a year ago, and now—slush.

He stood up, dully resolute. Thank God, he had still

the future. As for the actual woman in the case, her existence could be ignored. The Dolly Cohen of his creation was dead and gone.

Dead and gone? How the actual woman would have laughed had she heard the demise of her dearest sham thus confidently proclaimed! How gayly would her merriment have tinkled in derision!

Dead and gone? Dolly Cohen? Not she. Ready at the beck of the devil's advocate, she was even at this moment tripping lightly hither to go on the witness-stand.

Dead and gone? Nay, nay; he had reckoned without his evil. Eat, drink, and be merry she would, but the many-lived cattishness in her refused to die.

"Papa," she whispered, in the hall below, "is the top floor front at home?"

"Yes, I think."

"Praise Heaven! But I don't hear the sound of his writing."

"No; he is not M'sieur Clickety-tap any more. There has not been a click since Saturday evening."

Dolly bit her lip. "Ah! but there shall be soon. That *clickety-tapping* is music to my ears."

Moreau twirled up the ends of his mustache and smiled at her with debonair curiosity. "Now, why, my dear Céleste—"

"Dolly!" she corrected him, vehemently. "My name is Miss Dolly Cohen."

He closed one eye, and with the other quizzed her keenly. "Oh, là-là; Dolly, indeed. Eh bien, what next, ma chère?"

"There shall be no 'next.' Dolly I live, Dolly I die. It is the best—ahem!—alias I have yet chosen. Where's the dear mother?"

"The dear mother is in the kitchen."

"Good! Keep her there. Bake her a cake, something she likes, something large — un gâteau énorme. Feed her."

Monsieur nodded, winking. "Tout d' suite, ma chère, and later you will tell me—"

Quickly kissing one of the uptwirled ends of his facial adornment, "Yes, yes, later," she promised, and hastened up-stairs. "Peut-être," she mentally conditioned.

As for the actual woman in the case, her existence could be ignored. The Dolly Cohen of his creation was dead and gone.

A light double rap on the door succeeded this fatuous assertion.

With hasty caution Enoch transferred the neat, white pile of manuscript to his desk drawer. Who had come? Was it Cuthbert Morton again? Well, he could now meet Cutty with a freer eye. Crossing to the door, he unlocked and opened it; then started back, disconcerted. For a moment the actual woman, trig with a tight-fitting walking-dress and firmly rolled umbrella, stood on the threshold smiling up at his astonished face. The smile broke into an embarrassed laugh. "Oh, don't be angry; I couldn't wait. I've come to ask you to forgive me." Impulsively she stepped close to him and rested a hand on one of his broad shoulders. "Tell me you will."

Lloyd receded from the touch of her fingers, and, turning, went bewilderedly to the window. It is curious how, at such a moment, a window draws one to it. The mind, as though with a natural instinct, seeks, at least the prospect of liberty. He stood with his back to her. "I've nothing to forgive."

Dolly drew down the corners of her mouth with ironical amusement. Intuitively realizing that for once she would lose by nearness, she paused. "Ah, but you have.

Come, come; you're very inhospitable. Let's sit down and talk it over as man to man."

For mere politeness' sake Enoch drew up a chair for her, and seated himself at the desk. "There's nothing to talk about." He swept the hair back from his temple. "Nothing whatever."

"Oh, but there is. The situation has been so funny."

A smile stole into his ever-ready eyes. "Yes, *has* been!"

"And *is!*" flashed Dolly. Then, again assuming her harmless manner, "Is it not?" she asked, demurely, and fell to following the pattern of the carpet with her umbrella-point. "Let's see; it's this way: An author writes a book which is so beautiful, so noble and ideal in tone that it falls flat. The public is not yet a 'Heavenly Host.' It even resents the inference. So what does the 'Herald Angel' do? He dives like Lucifer to a different world. Here he will not be cut; he may even be worshipped." She rose and courtesied, and, taking one of his hands in hers, kissed it with airy grace. "Like that."

In the next instant, as she raised her head, a strained look in his face caught her attention. "You travesty life to a nicety," he commented, bitterly. (So cleverly had the favorite witness of the devil's advocate testified against him.)

With a sigh Dolly changed her tone, and, reseating herself, rested a hand on his knee consolingly. The case, in his opinion, was evidently graver than she had been led to imagine. "Why look so forlorn? You've done nothing wrong."

"I?"

"Of course, you.'

His eyes met hers steadily. A few short months had rendered possible a bold glance of deception. Under the scrutiny of Cuthbert Morton his unpractised eyes had faltered. Since then they had acquired a certain courage of the sham.

"*I?*" he repeated. "Do you still cling to the belief that I am Dolly Cohen?"

Her gaze mocked him under lowered lashes. "Do you still cling to the pretence that you aren't?" She scraped her umbrella-point with a motion less idle from side to side over the carpet, as though scratching out some obscure arabesque of her fancy. "Oh, come, what's the use? I tell you I know, and I can prove it. Do you want to see the proof? Oh, don't shrug your big shoulders at me. I've really got it. Here, see!" She opened her chatelaine-bag and took therefrom, with quick, pick-pocket fingers, a scrap of paper This she held up to his eyes. "Do you see what it says? Do you see that name? Whose handwriting is this? Now, tell me."

Lloyd fumbled for his cigarette-case. "Well, whose?"

"Naturally, I suppose it's yours," she answered, in a pleasant voice, "since I stole the scrap from your waste-basket."

Enoch started, shot a glance under the desk and then at her hand, as though measuring the distance between it and the receptacle in question. "Do you mean to say—" He studied her fingers in surprised admiration, much as one watches those of a conjurer on the stage. "Do you mean to say you got it under my very eyes?"

She took advantage, quick as a flash, of this amusing supposition. Of course he had written the name and discarded it on more than one occasion. "You turned your back to me for a moment, so I thought it well to punish you for that unpardonable piece of rudeness."

The mere feel of an unlighted cigarette in his fingers quieted Enoch's nerves. "Well, and what does this prove?"

She held up the scrap again and mimicked his easy tone. "Well, and what does it say?"

"I see the name 'Dolly Cohen.'"

"Yes; and you wrote the name 'Dolly Cohen.'"

"Perhaps so; but doesn't it occur to you that I may have been writing a review of one of Miss Cohen's interesting novels?" He smiled with triumph, expecting to see her wince, but in this he was disappointed. "Do you mind if I smoke?" he asked, reaching for a match.

Appearing abstracted, she fell again to embellishing the carpet's design with imaginary curlicues. Would it be well to let him smoke? Every point in the game, however trifling, came within the notice of her clever brain. All the influential trivialities of her diplomacy would be potent factors in the present instance. With remarkable acuteness she could estimate the value of trifles. Even a cigarette might aid her in imparting that soothing effect so often efficacious with cases of the kind. "I beg pardon?"

He brightened, believing her disconcerted. "You are absent-minded to-day. Small wonder. But, of course, you don't object to a cigarette?"

Dolly coughed. It might be well to keep him uneasy for a time, then later the palliative would have more influence. He must not yet have an aid towards self-command. "No, not as a rule. But I'm a little hoarse. The weather is in my throat."

Enoch shifted, and they both were silent, until, at last, "You see," he observed, dully, "there is nothing to talk about."

Dolly sat back with a laugh, and surreptitiously fingered the diminutive hunchback dangling at her side. His calmness piqued her. For a moment she forgot herself. "Pense-tu, chérie?" she mocked, after the way of the Boul'-Mich'. "Then, listen. But, no; even the walls have ears." She glanced at the door which now and again swung ajar in a draught from the Moreaus' bedroom. "You and I both fear ears, don't we?" Rising with an air of theatric mystery, she bent over him and whispered first one name and then another, and

next, reversing their order, repeated the two with slow significance.

Enoch trembled, as though struck. "God!" Flinging out his arms across the desk, he buried his face in them.

Dolly stood over him in amazement. Slowly her expression changed; it softened. Never before had she been at the Supreme Court of the Soul. Never before had the vital emotions of another been utterly devoid of passion for herself. Never before had she felt shivers in her back while watching at the struggle of a man's two selves. Never before had her eyes been moist with tears, neither of coquetry nor caprice. This was, indeed, a pretty piece of business. Why should the sight of his bent head weaken her resolve? Why should she stand and look down and say nothing when now, at this very moment, according to all the laws of her diplomacy, she should have cut the thread of the Damocletian sword? Why should she falter like a silly girl? Pah! The fellow had got upon her nerves. What nonsense! He must raise his head, and the sword must fall. Yet she could not bring herself to recall him otherwise than tenderly.

The tenderness of Dolly was thus expressed:

"Oh, là-là-là! Come! It doesn't matter. Take a brace. Smoke up." She patted his head. "Everything's all right. How absurd! What a baby! What a queer duck! Come!" She stole the cigarette from his fingers and struck a match. In another second a puff of smoke from her quivering lips flurried about him. "Come, smoke up! See, I've lighted it for you."

The struggle of the selves was over. Lloyd came out of it with added strength. Sitting up quietly, he shook his head. "No."

Dolly reseated herself. "Well, then, I'll keep it myself." She flicked away a flake of ashes. Vivacity was

a sure cure for weakness. Her eyes sparkled, catching the glitter of the Damocletian sword. Yes, yes; over his head it swung on the thread of her own spinning. She leaned back. A duel was at hand, with all its excitement and finesse, strategy and danger. He would fight well. His weapon was the heart within him. She would fight better. Hers was the sword that heart itself had forged. Swords of the heart's forging invariably hang over the head. Her eyes danced. The name and fame by which she lived must be defended at all hazards. How terrible to contemplate exposure!

"You see, I've won," she said, smiling.

"I see you have lost."

"Why be so foolish?"

"Why be so blind?"

"Blind?"

"Yes. not to see that I am determined. What if you do know? I confess 'Dolly Cohen' was my pseudonym —*was*, you understand! The sham is done with." His voice fell. "I did wrong."

Dolly took a long, last puff at her cigarette and tossed it into the fireless grate. "No, no, no! It was all natural enough. You failed. Well, an author must gain his public before he attempts such work as *The Greatest Good*. Who can rise with a single flight to the summit of Parnassus? Even you haven't wings for that. It is essential first to toil about the base and cut a roadway."

He looked up at her with slow wonder. "You argue well."

"Besides," she continued, with a deprecatory gesture, "your books are not bad. They're merely written to interest the reader. Many authors write solely to entertain, and their reputations are above reproach. We must have recreation in this world."

Lloyd shook his head drearily "Some are doubtless

intended merely to amuse and entertain, while others—" He paused and drew back a little.

Dolly's eyes were wide open. She surveyed him for a minute with speechless curiosity; then she smiled. She saw it all now. How droll! It had not been only fame that he wanted. Here was one of those extraordinary men who considered he had a mission. Well and good; every one to his hobby-horse, and hers was the part to mount him on it.

"Yes, yes," she said, with a remarkable semblance of comprehension and sympathy; "but there's a myth that shows that the world cannot be moved without a lever."

"You are very clever," said Lloyd, calmly.

She began again to follow the traceries of carpet and imagination with her umbrella-point. What did she thus design with her restless wand? What strange arabesques of fancy did she so frequently seem to suggest by this habit with the slim umbrella?

Suddenly she felt Enoch's gaze go so much deeper than usual that she raised her eyes to his, and, crossing her tiny ankles, inserted the ferrule between them.

But, perhaps, she had already hinted of designs in two senses. "No," said Enoch, as if to himself, "this is all sophistry."

"Sophistry?"

"Yes, the pot-boiling of mine was evil. But probably you do not understand—"

Dolly interrupted him with fervent warmth. "Oh, believe me, I do." Her mind was casting about in great commotion for another argument. "I do appreciate it." (Good, she had found one.) "I understand your feelings, but think of the thing clear-sightedly. One must always stoop to conquer. You can do far more good in the end this way than by only pleasing the dictates of yourself." She instilled great earnestness into her voice,

and did it well, being, indeed, desperately in earnest. "It is the only way you can reach the masses."

To her chagrin he only smiled at this, as though forearmed against all but her ultimate weapon. "Oh, I've said that to myself a thousand times. You seem to speak in the very voice of my temptation." He regarded her with a new consciousness, lost to all save the deeper situation. "Yes; you are my lower self personified," he mused aloud, forgetting even her presence and his usual chivalry. "You speak in the same way; you bear my pseudonym." He smiled bitterly. "Perhaps I am Jekyll and you are Hyde."

She burst out laughing, and his heart recoiled. The laugh suggested that of another woman—the outcast of the shaking plumes—the bird of prey who lately had flapped across his vision at four o'clock in the morning.

"I am Jekyll," he repeated, vaguely, "and you are Hyde."

Her laughter jangled on his nerves. "Thanks for the compliment. I had no idea we were so perfectly *at one*."

The sheer audacity of the remark put him off his guard. Slowly, very slowly, a smile stole into his eyes and about the corners of his expressive mouth, until at last he, too, laughed—laughed outright; but his laughter was boyish, and a look of mischief lighted up his face. He was dangerously confident of his own advantage. Not unlike a boy before the cage of a panther, he began, with one of his fatal transitions of mood, to take pleasure in amusedly inspecting this feline creature from outside the bars of his fixed resolve. He began to find diversion and self-elation in regarding her with a kind of pitying mirth. Like Tartarin—defiant, vainglorious Tartarin before the lion's cage—he could well be bold. Evidently he was on mischief bent. The boy would out in him, with all its love of teasing pranks and folly, its delight in

danger, its braggadocio and reckless fling. Even at this critical moment, when maturity should have marshalled its forces, the eternal boy would out. Besides, it was a great relief to appear careless.

"Well," he cried, rising buoyantly, "Dolly Cohen has had her day. You have enjoyed the name and the fame and some of the money."

Dolly raised her brows and glanced about the room, from the daubed creations of the Latin Quarter to the damp stains on the wall. "I'm sorry about the money," she told him, with pretty penitence. "We must share the profits in future. I hope you've another book done. Mr. Steele is clamoring for more."

Lloyd darted a hand to his desk drawer. "That's just what I was going to speak of. You know I warned you about it the other night. Yes; I have written a book. See!"

Pulling open the drawer, he took out the neat, white pile of manuscript, and flaunted it before her eyes. Thus, no doubt, did Tartarin wave at the hungry lion; thus do urchins tease catamounts caged in the Zoo.

For a second Dolly's eyes glittered with a look of incredible greed; in another they wandered from the desirable pile with amiable indifference.

"The title," pursued Lloyd more gravely, now that the moment of surprise was past, "is *Ashes of Roses*."

"Capital," nodded Dolly, with delight.

Enoch put down the manuscript, and stood with a palm flat on the pile. "This novel, to my surprise, I find is not quite so harmless as the rest. And yet I had not intended to make it—er—broader or spicier, to quote the demands of Steele. Somehow, it became so as I wrote." His tone was calmly discursive. "I suppose Hyde had assumed the upper hand." He closed his fist on the manuscript. "But that's neither here nor there. The main point is this: by to-night *Ashes of Roses* will be

—well—ashes of paper, and never shall Dolly Cohen write another book."

He flung his head back.

Perhaps the very pride of it tempted the overhanging sword.

Dolly stood up. "Oh, very well; drop this pot-boiling if you like. It is, indeed, a low, mean business for one so far above it." Her tone rose shrill and bitingly sarcastic. "So low that surely Enoch Lloyd—"

"S-sh!" he interrupted, glancing at the door; "some one will hear you."

She smiled knowingly. "There! Do you see? You don't want a living soul to know. Of course not. Can it be possible that Enoch Lloyd, author of that beautiful work *The Greatest Good*, is the—ahem!—*authoress* of that questionable bit of trash *The Flame of Folly*, and that still more glowing example of saffron literature *The Altar of Love?*" Her accents went hard and bitter; her dark eyes flashed a threat. "Yet, impossible as it may seem, this is the case." She stepped close to him and looked up into his eyes with keen insolence. "And every one shall know it!"

Enoch winced.

"Yes, every one. I shall write it up for Steele's paper—*The Crowd*. He'll forgive me quick enough, and such a sensation would double the sales of the books already written. Do you see? Do you see? Do you see? Isn't it better to give me this manuscript than to bear the sting and ignominy of such an exposure? Of course, if you let me have it"—she nodded at the neat, white pile —"I'll keep your secret. The book is yours and mine."

Lloyd sank to his chair. The last words were each a stab. All unknowingly, she had terribly wounded him. The words had been Marion's as well—Marion's when she had kissed *The Greatest Good*. "What of yourself?" he asked, dully.

She snapped her fingers. "You know what it means when I snap them—like that. It means I'm desperate. It means that if I die, I die game."

Lloyd covered the manuscript with an outstretched arm. "Do as you like," he said, hoarsely. "Do your worst."

She tripped lightly to the door, and, turning on the threshold, "Good-bye," she waved, airily. "I'll give you till ten o'clock to-night. You'd better bring it with you." She started down-stairs, then ran back again and thrust her head in. "Bring it anyway, and we'll talk the matter over. This is my birthday. How appropriate! Come, won't you? We can manage to be alone. There'll be a fire awaiting you in the queen's antechamber. We'll sit and chat, and then you'll either burn the book or give it to me." She vanished.

Lloyd sat watching the door creak open and shut in the draught from the Moreaus' bedroom. His restless fingers beside him toyed with the edges of the typewritten sheets. A shadow of hatred crept under the light of his eyes. In his heart he cursed her. Would it not be well to go there and take it and burn it before her very eyes, and see her wince, and hurt her to the quick? He was hastened on by inward forces—the unrecognizable powers of hell. Now that pride and bravado had betrayed to her the presence of the manuscript, their work was done. A feeling of revenge rushed in to bear it to her.

Long he sat there, watching the door of his destiny swing to and fro.

IX

The Blood of the Gods

AMID the clamor of the disguised enemies, that summons, which yesterday had worked such wonders, returned like an echo to call him back: "Come at once. —Marion Lee."

The commanding invitation had gained a limitless range. Transcending the obvious—the specific fact of her welcome—it seemed to offer him the perpetual hospitality of the right. Though he had answered it once, it seemed to demand that he should answer it again and again.

The opposing powers were marshalled within him, and yet he considered the conflict already past. Recognizing no presence save that of the fair, white hosts, which he deemed unconditionally victorious, he made no allowance for the foe's guerilla tactics, nor questioned the integrity of their truce. His mind, like that of a gallant but reckless soldier, galloped free in the open, blind to the ambush just ahead. On the course of his retribution stood a fort that invited his eye. There would the righteous wrath within him dismount for a moment of inspiration—there would its flame blow hotter at the heart of the fair, white hosts; then up again to Pegasus, and away for his soul's revenge.

Was it not at Athene's altar Bellerophon sprang to his steed? Was it not by his sword the Chimæra died?

So says the myth, human experience to the contrary notwithstanding. So thought the world in its youth,

but the world, grown old, knows better. It protests the Chimæra is still unslain. It suggests that a Pegasus worthy the stable of Zeus will safely bear its rider to the sky. The hero of Corinth should have started at once for Olympus and ignored the Chimæra's fate. The fable, if to-day revised, might imply that Pegasus threw the hot-head, not for his presumption in seeking the heavens, but rather for the attack, no less presumptuous, which prolonged his stay below.

But Youth is ever an ancient. In his heart is the youth of the race. Seldom he modifies madness. The blood of the gods flows on.

Enoch tarried at the altar of Athene on his way to the Chimæra's lair.

Marion was alone. At the moment of his arrival she stood near the heavy, round table before the fire, and, lingering over a crystal bowl of tea-roses, rearranged its contents merely for the sake of touching the delicate petals and inhaling deep their fragrant breath. Her head was bent to the flowers when Timothy's funereal voice from the doorway announced the unexpected guest.

Marion looked up in embarrassment. "Mr. Lloyd!"

Enoch, with a parcel under his arm, went to her slowly, while Timothy withdrew for a diagnosis in the pantry, based on the symptoms of sciatica and love.

Marion's cheeks flushed crimson. "What a way you have of appearing unexpectedly, Mr. Lloyd!"

He smiled and deposited his package on the table. "What a way you once had of disappearing unexpectedly, Miss Lee!"

She tossed her head and raised her hands to its burnished gold with an instinctive motion of femininity. "If I were vain, I should be annoyed." Deftly she imprisoned a straying strand, a lock so warm, thought

Enoch, that she might with no less impunity have replaced in the grate an ember fallen from the fire. The gold rippled burning through her fingers.

He lowered his gaze to her eyes. "Have I not done more to please your vanity than to vex it? I should think both your vanity and your pride must be satiated at my expense."

Her eyes flashed indignantly, but she said nothing. Instead, she fell again to arranging the roses.

Still the same old aloofness. Still the same invulnerable reserve. He had looked to her presence for inspiration at the beginning of this crucial night, but even her presence failed to help him. She seemed hard. Her sheer, fixed goodness antagonized him. She had no feeling; of course she could never understand.

"Are they not?" he asked, bitterly.

Sinking back into her father's arm-chair, she mentally repeated Enoch's indictment: "I should think both your vanity and your pride must be satiated at my expense.' The words were not a master's, but a suppliant's. They acknowledged her power. With inconsistent harshness she took offence at his humility. A Brünnhilde, whose knight must cut his way through fire to obtain her, and whose reserve until now had resented his masterful strokes, she suddenly, in her lofty, Spartan way, began to resent yet more the words that suggested weakness. Nevertheless, his indictment troubled her deeply — so deeply that her response was light. "My pride, I fear, is insatiable," she laughed, girlishly; "but my vanity is satisfied, now that I've arranged my hair."

Lloyd bit his lip, and seated himself near her. There for many minutes in moody silence he sat, with elbow on knee and chin in hand, staring into the fire.

She studied his face. Could it have grown older in a day? What had so suddenly made it strained and bitter?

A flood of sympathy overwhelmed the Spartan. The heart of the woman in her was touched. Rising, she brought him a cushion and told him he would be more comfortable leaning back, then stirred the logs to a brighter blaze, and turned up the student lamp beside him. What did she know of real life? What did she know of his experiences?

Gradually Enoch relaxed. He was sitting at the fire of the fair, white hosts. A smile stole into his eyes. "Vesta is dead. There's another goddess of the hearth." The smile faded. "But the fire of Æneas, that men once burned to Vesta, was never for a moment dim." Then, before she even had time to wonder, "Tell me," he asked, in a low voice, "what would you answer to the old question: Can a man do wrong for a time and yet remain inwardly unscathed? After it's over is he just as high, do you think, just as strong?"

Her reply was instant and unequivocal, though a moment before she had confessed herself ignorant of life. "No, never—never! The man who lives low *is* low."

Enoch paled. "How little you know about temptations!"

"Temptations? Temptations would make a strong man all the stronger. He would resist." She paused, startled. A sudden, horrid suspicion that her fire-cleaving knight, the author of *The Greatest Good*, the dreamer, the giver of dreams, was weak and had done some unimaginable wrong, froze her heart. His beseeching glance seemed now but a cry for mercy. All the cruelty of an outraged pagan deity flashed in her eyes. "If a man—a *man*—is tempted and falls, I despise him. If a poor sinner does wrong, he has my—*pity!*"

The tone with which the word "pity" was spoken rang in Lloyd's soul for years.

Little did Marion think that the tone thus condemning sin was the tone of her pride's own evil. Little could

she guess its consequence. Knowing naught of life, she had dared to judge and convict its failures. Yet the Keeper of Life forgives them. Perhaps nothing is more dangerous in the world than ignorant virtue.

Lloyd looked up at her clear, strong face with a hunted expression. One of his hands grasped an arm of his chair. "Marion, you are merciless." Then, in an instant, a flame of anger sprang into his eyes. "Where is your father? He will understand. I will tell him all."

Marion raised her brows coldly. "He is dining at the Millennium Club. They are admitting a new member. Father says you must join soon."

Enoch's face went paler perceptibly. He trembled. She saw the tense hand near her tighten its grasp. Its veins were rigid. "What do you know of life?" he cried. "Nothing; and nothing of love! I believe you *could* not love. The power is not in you. You might turn into marble as you sit there, and be placed in a marble niche, and the world would be no better, no worse. I might say my prayers to you there, and light candles at your shrine, but you would watch my soul rush down to hell, and your marble hands would be powerless to help me."

Marion shivered; her eyes grew dim. He was storming the very citadel of her pride.

For an instant he paused, then suddenly, with a wild impulse, took his parcel from the table and unwrapped it. "Listen! You shall hear what some people dare to do—what love is, what life is. This is a manuscript I've been reading for—a friend. Most of it is trash, but there are glimmers of talent." His fingers fumbled through the pages unsteadily. "Here, I have it. The chapter is called 'An Experiment.' In it a man and woman stake everything for their love. They fly in the face of the world's opinion, in the face of duty—even of God. Do you think you would have the courage to do that? No!" he exclaimed, rudely; "you would run away."

Marion's large, gray eyes were cold. "What right have you to—"

"Listen," he commanded, "and perhaps your heart will begin to beat. Is this trash—utter rubbish? Yes; but there's humanity even in melodrama. There is fire in the passion of a shop-girl." He was beside himself with trying to breathe the breath of life into this maddening marble statue.

Feverishly he leaned forward and held the pages under the light. Passage after passage he read aloud with rising intensity.

Suddenly she looked up. "Read that last part again."

He did so. The sentence that had impressed her was this: "*Love is the risking of eternity.*"

"How different," she said, "from what *you* wrote of love in *The Greatest Good!* '*Love,*' you said, '*is the capitulation of Heaven.*'"

He did not look up. His eyes were haunted.

"There was so much certainty," said Marion, "in *your* view. It almost seems as though the author of this were purposely distorting your sentiments. Do you suppose he can possibly—"

"Listen," interrupted Enoch, unable to bear the torture she was unconsciously inflicting; "this man knows." He read wildly to the end.

From time to time he could hear the sound of her breathing, first slow, then quicker and quicker drawn, till, at last, she sprang up outraged before him.

"That is love," he whispered, almost fearfully; "that is life!" His face was death-white; his gaze burned into hers.

Marion steeled herself against him. The passion of the words he had read stirred in her depths. The passion of his voice echoed through her. Nevertheless, she maintained a frigid composure. The chapter, being evil, had failed to strike the key-note of her heart. It had

only terrified her innocence. "This is a wicked book," she said, trembling. "How could you have read it to me? How *could* you?"

Enoch's manuscript slipped to the floor. Visibly trembling, he stood up and faced her. The Dolly Cohen in him was face to face with the Enoch Lloyd. Marion, personifying his best self, had suddenly challenged his worst. The moment of this meeting—this meeting face to face of elemental forces—carried him away. He stood before his judge, and the hard, merciless gaze of that righteous mentor cut him to the quick. So far as he personally was concerned she still remained the marble statue. He had not succeeded in awakening her to his own turbulent good-and-bad vitality. The failure drove him to madness. His heart moaned for the mastery; his eyes were blue flames.

She was moving slowly away, like one in a dream. . . .

Suddenly an impulse of primitive savagery inspired him. It possessed him body and soul.

She was moving away. . . .

The impulse told. Without a word he rushed forward and flung his arms about her in a wild hold, and kissed her full on the lips. "This is love," he whispered, insanely; "and this—and this!"

Releasing her, he fell back a step and waited.

She swayed palpitant before him—a living flame. The fire seemed to have leaped across the hearth and wrapped her in its folds. She swayed quivering before him—a flame in a wind. Her figure burned. The statue was flesh and blood. The key-note of her heart, in tune to him, and him only—the key-note of her secret heart in tune to the love of him—had been struck with resonant intensity. And yet the swelling echo of the note seemed to toll the knell of her girlhood.

Desperately she fought against her heart for self-control. Her voice at first was a low monotone. "Now,

go. You have succeeded. You have called me into life —yes, but I hate you. You have called me into life and hate, not into love. Now, go."

Her distracted glance evaded his with a wild bitterness. She trembled from head to foot, and steadied herself against the mantel. Suddenly a flood of tears burst from her eyes, and all he could hear was, "Father! Father!" She turned and buried her face in her arm, upraised to the mantel-shelf. Her shoulders were convulsed with weeping.

Awe-struck, Lloyd fell to his knees. "Marion, Marion; what have I done? Forgive me, Marion." He caught the hem of her dress and kissed it reverently. "My marble saint, my goddess, give me back the touch of your hand, the sure, cool touch of your goodness. Oh, God, how it has helped me!" He clasped the hand at her side, and bowed his forehead to it.

For the moment the heat and light of the fire seemed to expand about them, till they stood in the heart of its burning. The silence sobbed in glowing beats. Then suddenly an eternity passed with the deep indrawing of a breath, and Marion—a vanishing flame—had left him.

Catching up his manuscript, and its paper covering, Lloyd rushed headlong down to the street.

The blood of the gods flows on.

X

The Course of the Incubus

ENOCH paused and mechanically tied up his manuscript in its brown wrapper. Then, parcel under arm and head bent, he started slowly up the avenue. Once more the look of life had changed. He saw nothing clearly, nor were his feelings defined. Though exalted, with an intense, passionate exaltation, never experienced before, he hung his head, and his step was slow. Though he felt in a way ennobled, he walked as if abased by disturbing convictions. Though he was going to the other woman for revenge, and to make an end of it all, he was going doggedly, no longer on fire with impatience.

Thus absorbed, he gave no heed to a sound of quick footsteps behind him till suddenly a hand clapped him sharply on the shoulder, and a voice, cold as the night, proclaimed: "Mr. Lloyd, you are my prisoner."

The captive, white as a murderer caught in the act, halted and turned.

A pair of rimless glasses, reflecting the street-light in two keen little dancing spots, looked up into his distracted eyes. A cackle of mischief betrayed impish delight in his momentary discomfiture.

"Hallo, Cutty," he said, relaxing. Then, with a sort of quick, shamefaced generosity: "I suppose I ought—" He paused.

Cuthbert thrust an arm in his. Together they walked up the avenue. "Oh, let bygones be bygones. I've buried the hatchet. Gad! Enoch, you look like a felon

—head down, step a slink"—he peered around at the parcel held close to the pit of Lloyd's free arm—"step a slink, and the graft on you."

Enoch laughed shortly. "Where did you come from?"

Cuthbert chuckled. "From the Sign of the Sleuth, of course, in Mulberry Street, hot on your trail."

Lloyd mirthlessly muttered something disconnected. It sounded like, "As usual . . . you . . . my trail."

Cuthbert withdrew his hand. "No; I stopped at the Lees' for the venerable Stephen. There's something going on at the Millennium Club this evening, but he's gone already. Let's see; what's your residence? Bristol, isn't it? Still Bristol, I suppose?"

"Yes, still Bristol."

"That's good. Come along. I can take you in. I want you to meet the crowd. You'd better let Mr. Lee propose you for membership. I'll second you. He was speaking of it the other day. There won't be any question. They are all talking about *The Greatest Good*. Of course, they say it's impractical, but the right stuff. They want men who have at heart the interests of the best in everything. Lord! Of course they're not perfect; but this much I do believe: not one of us up there, not a single member of the Millennium Club, is a charlatan. They're all kinds, men of all professions—great doctors, great authors, great preachers, great painters, profs from Columbia, editors from Park Row, sociologists from the University Settlement. And there are lots who aren't great but will be, and others who aren't and won't be—Cuthbert Morton, for example. But we're all dead against the spirit of sham, the growing element of chicanery. We're dead against the lust for notoriety, art cant, affected intellectuality, chattering reform, charity that's nothing but talk, philanthropy with a wink, civics with a wire to pull—et cetera. We're *not*

cheap, and we *are* sincere. That's the Millennium Club in a nutshell."

He thrust his arm in Lloyd's again. "And we want you with us."

So twittered the voice at Enoch's elbow till the bearer of the incubus began to stagger in spirit beneath its weight. Cuthbert was hustling him along to the Millennium Club. The nervous hand on his arm seemed compellent, with a kind of jerky power like the piston-rod of a donkey-engine. At first Enoch offered no objection. Doubtless, the mere atmosphere of such a club-house would afford him the encouragement and inspiration he longed for. Moreover, deep and unvoiced within him lurked the hope of a gratifying welcome—a flattering welcome, which possibly might reward a visit to the house of his acknowledged peers, and quiet the haunting dismissal of Marion's last words. Yet, what right had he to mingle with crusaders against chicanery, antagonists of sham? "We are not cheap, and we are sincere." Cuthbert's pithy assertion of integrity called forth in Lloyd's mind a similarly terse though unspoken statement of fact, a declaration bitter, antithetical, self-denunciatory, and quite as true. "I *am* cheap, and I'm *not* sincere."

He hugged the parcel to his side. His incubus grew heavy as lead. He was freighted with the entire burden of his own misdeeds. Seemingly, they had assumed material form; they had become an actual, concrete object, a thing, and the thing was a bundle of manuscript hugged to his armpit. What right had he to take it within the doors of the Millennium Club? If only he could have slipped away for a moment and hidden or destroyed it, then with what lightness and ease of heart he might have rejoined his friend and met his peers. His eyes wandered ahead to the lighted corners of side streets, as though he actually contemplated a sudden swerve. He

kept dully to the avenue, block after block, answering in monosyllables the running fire with which Cuthbert at a venture attacked him. Manifestly, escape was impossible. He would put on a bold front and go to the club. Suppose the manuscript did still exist, suppose the thing in his arm had not yet been destroyed, what of that? The self it stood for was annihilated. This incubus, one might have said, was no more than the corpse of his lower self. Later, he would bury it without ado, or cremate it, to be exact, and the devil was welcome to its ashes. Thus his mind took a lighter, travestical turn, and began to caricature the figments of its fancy. The strain had told. Though always right at heart, free and big of life, he had never learned the meaning of the verb "endure." If the attack had been swift and sharp, bold and open, impulse could have met it and repulsed the enemy. To withstand a siege he was little fitted. Valor is not endurance. The arrows of impulse often overshoot the mark. They break and lie wasted, useless. Youth pulls his bow at random; his quiver is quickly empty. Alack, what then? No fort of retreat is behind him; his castle is in the air. There is naught for it now but to joke and parley with the enemy, inwardly fearing them, outwardly bantering them with fine top-loftiness, humor, and an air.

Lloyd's animation increased. He swung along by the side of his jerky, short-gaited companion with growing ease. The metaphor of the dead self and the corpse of it wrapped in a shroud of brown paper had lightened his mood. Now, as usual, a trick of dabbling in analogy had come to his rescue. Even his belief in immortality, though firm, was based on a simile. Look at a fact he could not, and yet to some glowing figure of speech he would lend the ear of his soul. In a way he had never outgrown the fairyland of his childhood. He dwelt in a realm of allegory. Only by calling his higher self Jekyll, his lower

Hyde, had he presented the case clearly to his understanding. Only by calling this bundle the corpse of Hyde, and himself more fortunate than Jekyll in being alive to bury it, did he find courage to visit the Millennium Club.

Meanwhile a deep consciousness of change swept like a swift undercurrent through his being. That eternal moment by the fire with Marion had become his life. His love had flowered as though by an accident, as though by the stroke of a sudden exception, a spontaneous impulse towards fruition, transcending the law of gradual growth. Again and again her name rang in his depths. Marion! Marion! Again and again he relived that undying moment. But no less often her avowal of hatred dulled the triumphant song. Did she hate him? Had he really awakened her to hate instead of love? No; a thousand times, no. Something assured him he had not lost her, and yet his mind was not perplexing itself with reasons. He never analyzed circumstance in the logical sense. He was far too elemental to be introspective for more than a moment at a time, and now, as so often before, his volatile temperament enabled him soon to assume a new mood, and on the surface lose himself amid new surroundings.

It was nine o'clock when he and Cuthbert entered the home of the Millennium Club. The house of that long and deservedly famous association was by no means of a recent build, nor were the rooms luxuriously furnished. Partly on this account the domain of the Millennium was, as Stephen Lee, its president, took pleasure in observing, "one of the clubbiest clubs in existence." "Even halls of fame," he was wont to say, "may now and then open to rooms of comfort."

On crossing the threshold of the present hall, which was long, heavily carpeted, plainly papered, and lined with framed photographs of former members, Enoch gave his

coat and hat to the door-boy, then, with a slight misgiving, the corpse of Hyde. While Cuthbert was registering his companion's name in the guest-book, Enoch hovered near the walls. From these looked down many old, familiar faces of America's great men gone. The photographs, large and small, all sizes, and in all degrees of fading, were those of the illustrious in varied walks. Here and there, framed in velvet and leather, an old daguerrotype, dim and shadowy, suggested the picture of a ghost. This, in a pleasing sense, was, indeed, a hall of fame. Here, instead of a formal public exhibit, was offered an easy glimpse at greatness, as if those of to-day were closely acquainted, either by actual reminiscence or the more intangible but no less intimate relationship of intellectual and psychical fellowship, with personalities of the distinguished dead. Here might genius browse among its peers. Here might a member pause as though in company with fellow-members, yet alive. Here the kind ghosts were at their ease—congenial spirits in a fitting home. Happily the collection hung at random, much as these men had mingled in their lives. Actors, authors, painters, statesmen, doctors, clergymen, poets, all were silently assembled, while some with a touch of intimacy in the form of an autograph or a thumb-nail sketch, a scrap of verse or a letter framed beside them, afforded, as it were, a peep at their natures in being.

"Peace to their ashes," said Cuthbert, joining Enoch. "Come in now and meet a few of their successors."

As the two sauntered towards a distant door, another opened, and several members came into the hall from the dining-room. One of them stopped to speak to Morton. Enoch, aside, glanced at the others. Among these was Parker, the dramatist, his fellow-lodger of the Washington Hotel. Another, with close-cut, reddish hair and a net-work of wrinkles, was recognizable as an author

whose work had lightened care the country over. Seemingly this man had been charged by a benign Providence with the keeping alive of laughter on an aging earth. Whatever had been his own individual fate, he had held aloft his lamp of humor to the world.

The face of a third, romantic, dark-bearded, striking, was that of a well-known traveller whose books and lectures, glowing with actual adventure, yet modestly indifferent to the inevitable "I" so frequently marring anecdote, afforded many an instructive and thrilling glimpse at the still unerased blots of savagery that spot the map of Christendom.

Enoch gazed after the backs of the three till they had disappeared through the doorway of a small billiard-room.

"What's up?" he heard Morton asking.

"Oh," replied the other, "we've just admitted young Pritchard, the sculptor. He's the man who did 'The Pioneer.' The statue was finished a month ago. It's the gift of J. M. Crawford, the Pittsburg millionaire, to a Western university."

"Hum; is it good?"

"Yes. They say the conception is excellent. The principal figure is that of a man. Over his shoulder he carries a pick-axe, with the other hand he leads a child. But the pose is the thing. I've seen a photograph. It fairly speaks of a virgin country. The man has come upon a world of infinite possibilities. He seems to be thrilled with eagerness to begin. He is starting forward on fire with hope and freedom, an indomitable interloper, and his heavy hand, in cruel forgetfulness, drags after him the frightened child. I tell you, this young Pritchard promises well. He's *big;* no question about it. Well, I'll see you later. There go the billiard-balls. Parker and the rest are waiting." With which the speaker, a middle-aged, smooth-faced man, nervous energy in ev-

ery motion, cast a bright, inquiring glance at Enoch, and left them for the game.

"That," whispered Cuthbert, "is Joseph Stillman. He's done as much, I suppose, for the East Side as any one. He lives there."

Enoch nodded thoughtfully. "Like the pioneer, he has come, I should imagine, on a world of infinite possibilities."

"Yes; and the rest of the civicists lag behind him, scared as the child. But he drags them on. Come into the library. I can't show you the dining-room now. It's probably crowded. It's a tradition of the club that whenever a man's admitted, the honor done him and the honor he does us shall be appropriately marked. There's always a dinner, and the president, Stephen Lee, offers a short toast of election, after which the new member is expected to respond. Poor young Pritchard! He was probably trembling in his boots. He's modest as a girl, they tell me. Well, *you* will be put to it soon, I hope, and when *your* dinner comes off I'll be here. You may depend on that. Here, be comfortable; have a cigar."

They seated themselves in the library, a long room papered maroon, lined with book-shelves, and furnished with leather arm-chairs, lounges, and a massive, rectangular centre-table, piled with newspapers and magazines. Against the chimney hung a large portrait of yet another pioneer, one of the first poets—perhaps the first, and as yet the last—to sing the Western Spirit. With his rakish felt hat on the back of his head in vagabond negligence, and his shirt wide open at the throat, he looked down upon Lloyd with a bold, free gaze, as though offering once again his big, reckless, rough-and-ready comradeship to any who, like himself, swung along on the Open Road.

For a time the two talked of this one and others, and of literature in general, and of certain books in particular;

of the arts and the sciences, and men who work. For an hour they sat there in a corner of the world's workshop, the youthful author now and then losing himself in the chat of the toil, and the critic, at a venture, bringing him back with covert acuteness by innocently summoning the ghosts of the True and Great—ghosts, praise Heaven, unlayable—while pithily, though not with enough point to arouse suspicion, he made them exemplars, each, so to speak, a separate, cruel conscience to the Angel of the trailing wing.

Thus, with an incessant twitter and chirrup, the often-despised, often-admired little Cutty, himself at present the cruelest conscience of all, succeeded, by a peculiar habit of mental pricking and pinching, in applying a kind of counter-irritant close to the other's wound. For instance, with a nod at the wayfarer against the chimney: "Well," he concluded, after an easy gossip, "they may carp as they will. He was a man of a single purpose, a single heart. That is not to be denied, at any rate."

"Yes; but he went too far," objected Enoch, glad of a chance to cavil.

"Too far? Perhaps; but he went too far—in a straight line." Then, quickly: "Oh, the deuce! Have a drink. I forgot," added the chary prodder, and avoided any further suggestive allusions long enough to appear devoid of guile.

At first this cauterization nettled the patient almost beyond endurance, but soon it proved beneficial to the sore. It had a tonic effect. As they talked, Lloyd took new heart. The capacity to be true and great had not been forfeited. The big, free life of the Open Road still throbbed in his veins. The heat of indomitable vitality was yet in his heart. He, too, looked out on a world of infinite possibilities. He, too, might drag men after him, as the pioneer was dragging the child. The fire which

was, in fact, the very opposite of decadence—the fire of life—had not been extinguished in his soul. True, it had sunk for a time and smouldered, but now once more the flame that had sprung up again at the hearth with Marion leaped high in him, fanned by the nervous energy of Cuthbert.

When at last the dining-room was empty in favor of the library, he felt almost at home among the Millennium's members. Despite their indisputable attainments, they appeared to be, with few exceptions, about as genial and unaffected a company as any man could wish to know. Of course, they were not immune to satire. Of course, the best-known had been caricatured and repeatedly lampooned, thanks to the time-honored right of the public to laugh at the friends it loves. There was nothing particularly striking about them, nothing to start at, little to surprise the eye and ear. Some looked utterly commonplace, and the jokes of many were futile as could be. Your genuine lion gambols like a lamb; he wishes his skin were woolly. Nevertheless, now and then, for all their simple, easy naturalness, the lion showed. A quick, sudden witticism, a low-drawled quip at a fellow-member, a gesture, a mimic pose, an earnest word, a momentary silence, and the true spirit of one and another flashed an impression on Enoch's mind. If any appeared unusual, it was because the self in him would out. What they were, they were; what they were not, they were not.

It did Lloyd good to be there. Not that it flattered his vanity much—so few even mentioned his work—but because he seemed to be welcome, quite like one of themselves.

Well did the portrait of the bare-chested poet—that vigorous prophet against the chimney — preside over groups like these. And yet they were mostly city men—men of the stress and strain—the central currents of

progress. The only open road they knew was within themselves. The man up there had sung of the shapes that arise; the men below him lived among shapes that had risen. Many, of course, had failed in a worldly sense, but their faces bespoke the virility of endeavor. Charlie Parker, the dramatist, for instance, had matched himself against the theatrical trust, and was fighting it tooth and nail with a very few managers and critics —Cuthbert Morton foremost among the latter—while Stephen Lee, for another instance, struggled on, as we know, against the invasion of that which he considered a too-commercial system.

At the moment when Lloyd regarded these two he was in a circle with Morton and several others, Mr. Lee and Parker, who had met in the hall, having just entered. Parker had finished the game at billiards; Mr. Lee, the pleasant formalities of the toast. Together they joined the newly admitted sculptor, young Pritchard, a slim stripling, downy-lipped, fragile, soft-skinned, yet possessed withal of an indefinable power. Together they joined him and put him at ease, while Mr. Lee, having caught sight of Lloyd, led the two towards the corner circle.

Enoch and Cuthbert rose to meet him.

"How are you, Lloyd? How do you do, Morton? I'm glad you brought him. We'll have another dinner of admission soon. That reminds me, Lloyd—I'd like to propose your name."

"Yes," said Cuthbert, "and I will second it."

Enoch flushed. "You are both very good," he began, and hesitated. Then, quickly, "I cannot thank you enough," assented Impulse, in a low, fervent voice. "To become a member of the Millennium Club has been one of my brightest hopes."

Mr. Lee nodded, smiling, and turned to Parker. "I want you to meet Mr. Lloyd."

The two shook hands. "We live in the same kennel," observed the bald-headed dramatist, with easy greeting.

"Yes," chirped Cuthbert, "you gave me Lloyd's address."

"So I did. It's funny, Mr. Lloyd and I haven't met before; but that's Gotham all over. Three men in a tub wouldn't know one another in this metropolis."

Mr. Lee took the sculptor by the elbow. "Mr. Lloyd, this is Mr. Pritchard. I've long wanted you to meet. You're two of a kind, a fine pair of angels, on my word—each quite as mad as Dædalus—but your wings haven't melted off. Come, Parker, tell me about the Octopean struggle." So saying, he led aside the dramatist, while coffee and cordials were being passed. Save for the publisher and Parker, who stood near the centre-table, the members were idling about in separate groups, and many had departed. Pritchard, scarcely with pioneer boldness, had obliterated himself as far as possible, and in subdued tones was now modestly discussing Praxiteles with a gray-maned professor of Greek from Columbia University. The circle had further been augmented by the black-bearded traveller and the humorist, the former of whom, having succumbed to the persistent efforts of Cuthbert, was spinning a yarn to his cigar smoke concerning the monastics of Thibet. Meanwhile, the guardian of laughter, keeping up a running commentary, sprinkled spice on the eagerly devoured morsels of exploit.

Now and again Enoch glanced at the two who stood near the centre-table. They were talking in low, serious tones, this pair of modern crusaders, and Mr. Lee's apple cheeks glowed, and so did the bald spot of Parker. Pretty crusaders these. A bald head instead of a helmet, a pair of apple cheeks and squirrel eyes instead of a visor, ominously drawn. But Enoch, forgetting the monastics of Thibet, only smiled good-humoredly. It made no dif-

ference. He saw life deeper now. Externals, of course, were altered, but still the hosts of the right moved on. All that he had to do was to bury his incubus, then he could join that resolute throng. Already he had decided to cremate the thing, to burn it alone with fate. The Chimæra might prowl unslain. He now felt too well contented to seek revenge. From here he would go straight home and destroy the manuscript this very evening. Let the woman do her worst. Let her expose him. In time he could live it down. He would confess the thing like a man to Stephen Lee, and even to Cuthbert, and even—yes, even to Marion; then give the good in him free rein. Yes; he would toil for years, if need be, in pursuing his highest aim. Few would know save those he told. His name was obscure, anyway. He had little or nothing to lose, and all to gain. Perhaps these members of the Millennium Club would—well, perhaps they would lay his name on the table, but in the end he would prove worthy of admission. And, besides, the woman might hesitate to expose him, since by doing so she would ruin herself. If she forbore not even the sting of a temporary stigma would leave its mark.

His glance kept returning to Stephen Lee and the plucky, nonchalant dramatist. The publisher, with one hand on the table, and the thumb of the other in his waistcoat arm-hole, looked down now and again abstractedly at the magazines and newspapers strewn beside him. Suddenly, while Lloyd watched him, the old man started, bent his gaze to a daily journal, and, raising his gold-rimmed glasses, began to read. As he did so a look of astonishment crossed his face, then a glow of pleasure. Catching up the paper in great excitement, he held it out to Parker and pointed to one of the columns with beaming pride. The little old gentleman's eyes stole around towards Lloyd, then back again to the paper, their lights dancing. With the tip of his tongue

he moistened the corners of his berry-like mouth—a sign of extreme satisfaction.

Parker read the article with widening eyes, and, handing back the journal, he, too, shot a glance of interest at Enoch.

Mr. Lee, with the paper in hand, bustled forward to the corner circle.

Lloyd, thus interrupted in the shaping of his resolve, hastily confirmed it within himself by a terse, mechanical repetition. "Straight home. My name is obscure, anyway. There's nothing to lose, and all to gain."

As he reiterated this conclusion, Mr. Lee, with a flourish, held out the paper. The little old gentleman pointed a trembling forefinger at the column farthest to the left. "See that! See that! It's yesterday's paper. This is news, if there ever was any."

Morton, Pritchard, and the rest looked on in mild curiosity. The friars of Thibet retired into their cells. The veteran humorist and his victim, the explorer, glanced up through their smoke at Enoch's face.

Lloyd rose and looked at the beginning of the article. It was the London Letter of the Sunday *Tribune*.

"There is undoubtedly much consternation on account of the Colonial Secretary's unsparing—"

Enoch skimmed to the paragraph below:

"London takes the American strike very seriously. *The Saturday Review* even goes so far—"

Lloyd's glance fell lower still:

"In literary circles there is a great commotion. Suddenly a book entitled *The Greatest Good*, by a new American author, has sprung into public notice. Most of the reviewers had ignored it, but Arthur Strickland, the well-known critic, writing in *The Academy*, has just come out

with an article lauding it to the skies. So another wrangle is probably afoot among the scribes, and the public already has begun to pay the piper. The book is selling wonderfully. It is unquestionably the sensation of the week. The name of its author, Enoch Lloyd, has appeared in print for the last three days nearly as often as the Colonial Secretary's. Mr. Strickland will have a letter in the *Times* to-morrow morning maintaining that the book is far too good for mere ephemeral puffery. With characteristic earnestness he deplores the sensation. Mr. Lloyd's name, he even declares, if the young author lives up to this first promise, will in time be revered by thousands of readers."

Lloyd's glance, utterly dazed, rested for a moment on the lowest paragraph:

"At the Adelphi a three-act farce—"

He found his voice. "It seems impossible." His cheeks were on fire, and his eyes.

The humorist, wondering, nudged the explorer. Cuthbert peered at the paper over Enoch's shoulder.

"My congratulations," said Parker, gayly.

Pritchard seemed to be studying Enoch's figure, as though it were that of a model worthy of marble. Perhaps he would have entitled it "Attainment."

The tip of Mr. Lee's tongue sidled from corner to corner of the berry mouth. He glanced at Enoch with fatherly pride. "So sudden!" he exclaimed, in a low voice. "So very sudden! Well, that's the way of it nowadays. There's never any telling. Funny, isn't it? You're the proverbial prophet over again, except that after this you will probably receive all the honor you want even in your own country."

Enoch listened without a thought. The moment was far too big, too sweet, for reason. He felt inspired. The paper trembled in his hand. His blood was hot; his

heart throbbed. He could almost have wept with happiness. He said nothing.

Mr. Lee understood, and fairly basked in his protégé's joy. "Now, aren't you glad," he laughed, all but inaudibly, "you didn't take Steele's advice?"

Enoch started; the paper rattled; he glanced down at the fateful sheet to hide the sudden, icy paleness of his face. "Yes, yes; of course." About his heart a cord seemed to tighten and cut deep. The fever of attainment died to the chill of guilt.

"At the Adelphi," he read again and again, mechanically, "a three-act farce—"

His brain caught at the word "farce," and hung to it. For a moment that word was the only possible utterance of his consciousness. All the life in him chattered it with deafening insistence. Farce! His thoughts concentrated on it, desperately needing an edge. Farce! The word sharpened them quickly. Farce! The word defined his present existence, and the spirit of truth in him accepted the definition. "Yes," it whispered, "farce! farce!"

Though talking and laughing and keeping as natural a front as possible, he had suddenly succumbed to a panic of fear. A new realization filled his mind. What if the woman should expose him now? What if she had already done so? And his name was a name that men might revere; his name was known. It was not obscure. Now he had everything to lose. If the world became aware that Enoch Lloyd was Dolly Cohen, that the author of *The Greatest Good* had wantonly written shady trash, and skulked under that preposterous pen-name, its jeering laughter would follow him to the grave. How bitterly Arthur Strickland would despise him. But who was this Arthur Strickland? What if he did? How curious that an utter stranger, a foreigner, a mere name, should suddenly have taken a part in his destiny! Yes;

Strickland would be called a dupe, and Enoch Lloyd a literary swindler. Never could he live down so terrible an obloquy. The sting of the stigma would prove fatal to his soul. Never again could he lift his head. And, besides, his influence over men would be forever lost. Yes, cried the voices of hell, his ennobling influence over mankind would be forever gone. *The Greatest Good* would become the byword of cynics. It would synonymize hypocrisy. It would become a proverb by which to define a pharisee. Oh, God! Who could face so ignominious a future? This, at all events, was the work of fate. From abroad, like a flash from an unseen cloud, had come this message to change his life. There was no reasoning against chance, no accounting for Arthur Strickland, no possibility of opposing the infinite. Yes; he must go to her at once. Whatever might happen, he must go to the actual Dolly Cohen. She held his future in her hands.

"Good-night, good-night," he said to one and another. "I had nearly forgotten an appointment." He left them.

Again the humorist nudged the explorer, the publisher winked at the humorist.

"It's too much for him," laughed Parker, lighting a fresh cigar. "He'll get over it soon enough; that's certain."

The humorist nodded. "The beginning of fame," said he, "is like the first moment of a honeymoon. Afterwards comes the trouble."

"Bah!" exclaimed the traveller, still reminiscent. "Honeymoons aren't always green cheese. Now, when I was down in Tahiti—"

Thus the lions gambolled on, but Cuthbert said little, and Enoch, with an incubus heavy as a millstone, went the way that his panic led him.

XI

The Witch's Caldron

"FÉLICE, you do not understand the subtleties of dressing."

Dolly stood at her mirror dawdling over the final, effective touches of her toilet. She was dressed like a débutante, in a gown of white chiffon, trimmed with bow-knotted ribbons and sprigs of blossoms. "It is well to be maidenly," she thought, "on one's birthday. This is the anniversary of about the only day when I knew nothing." Yet, of course, there must be touches. She could not forego a hint. Sheer white meant only vacuous innocence, but white with a dot of color was innocence with a soul. How dearly she loved contrast! How nicely she understood suggestiveness! Drawing a rosebud from a slender, crystal vase on her dressing-table, she held it out stem foremost to Félice. "You've forgotten the thorns."

Shamefacedly the dutiful Creole glanced about for a pair of scissors. Dolly frowned. "Use your fingers. Don't you see I am waiting? You deserve a punishment." Félice said nothing, but proceeded to pluck away the thorns, one by one, with so much haste that suddenly the blood ran. "Look out!" cried Dolly, annoyedly. "Keep away. It will drop on my skirt." Taking the rosebud, which was large, firm, and of a deep-crimson hue, she inserted it in the central crevice of her bosom. "There, Félice," she observed, standing back a little from her mirror and breathing deeply to stir the

bud; "*that* is a subtlety." She smiled at the glass. "Félice, if the worst came to the worst, how would you like to be a dressmaker? I've often thought I might do so. It's fashionable now. We'd have a nice little white-and-gold shop in Fifth Avenue, and be modistes or milliners. How delightful! I believe I could do it splendidly. Stand here." She stepped aside, and, posing the Creole before the mirror, proceeded to act the part of a couturière fresh from Paris. "Ah, ma'm'selle, c'est charmante." She played about the slender figure with airy, flattering fingers. "C'est magnifique!" She turned away, laughing softly. "If the worst comes to the worst, I need never go hungry."

Her expression was indefinably bewitching. Where others of her order would have betrayed in sensuousness of costume their true natures, only suggesting by little touches and airs the naïveté of young girls, Dolly reversed the effect. To-night she preferred to play the ingénue, so far as her look permitted, unadorned by any jewels whatsoever, and to seem all the more fascinating in simplicity, with only a single hint of seduction, and this a bud! A master of the feminine art sartorial, she dressed for the mood of the man.

So arrayed in the present instance, the Queen of Bohemia at last seated herself in her bow-window, took up a dainty silk brochure of poems, and, skimming from verse to verse, awaited the assembling of her court.

Meanwhile Bonhomme, who had been sleeping under the throne, emerged, stretching himself.

Her majesty smiled. "Isn't your little body elongated enough already? Stand up. Quick! Like Sennacherib!" Obediently the dachshund rose on his hind-legs. "Now, come; hurry!" With great difficulty the whim-ruled pet advanced step by step until, being finally within reach of his mistress, he tottered forward, and with a grotesque little jump of gladness found support by

resting his forepaws on her knees. While he stood there and panted with lolling tongue, his large, pathetic eyes, looking about and up at hers, seemed to say, "It was very hard, you know, but I'd do anything for *you*."

He did not stand there long. Dolly caught up his paws from the white chiffon. "Little beast, get off!" She pushed him backward roughly. "You're as much of a bother as the rest of them."

As if to forgive her harsh rebuff, he came and sat down at her feet, and, raising his nose, tried to lick her hand.

"There you are; that's just like them. Why didn't you try to make me afraid? You're a little fool. You're just like Matthew. You skulk away and whine. Why don't you complain when I hurt you? Why don't you bite me?" She clasped a hand over his long muzzle and squeezed it so hard that he wriggled off with a little cry, but only to return more meekly apologetic than before. "Coward!" she exclaimed, pettishly, "you haven't half the spirit of a cat."

He snuggled up against her skirt and proceeded to lay him down in peace. Somehow, the mere contact of so helpless and mild a creature kindled her anger. Her mind, always devious and distorted in fancy, began to cast about in a spiteful way for some torment that would instil a little of her own feline complexity and spirit into the faithful pet. What a bore he was to-night! She would have much preferred a dangerous companion. Suddenly she stood up and went into the dining-room, her eyes alight with a gleam of amusement and wanton cruelty. She knew what metamorphosed men and brightened their wits. Would it not transform the stupid dog as well? Her fantastic imagination, so often feeding on the grotesque, conceived a diverting experiment. Calling Bonhomme, she dipped a spoon into the punch-bowl, caught his nose, and forced the strong de-

coction down his throat. "There, you've never had a medicine like that before! Do you know what this will do? This will make a man of you. You shall have the pleasure of being a fool."

He crawled away into a dark corner, but Dolly filled the spoon again and sought him out. "Here's another. Oh, how you will stagger! But perhaps you won't. How droll! Perhaps your legs are too crooked already ever to be crookeder. Perhaps the punch will make you walk straight." She forced the second spoonful between his teeth, then, while he lay there cringing and huntedly eying her, still a third. When she was returning again from the punch-bowl he started up with a cry, and, darting past her, fled skulking under the dining-table. Dolly was for going on her knees to drag him out and administer the final dose, when Félice appeared in the doorway.

"Ma'm'selle, the guests are arriving."

Dolly nodded and downed the spoonful herself. "Show them in."

In a moment she was receiving her court.

To-night she saw signs of a slight improvement in the quality of the doubtful coterie. One or two of her garish luminaries were now supplanted by more starlike lights. Among the latter was a comic-opera librettist, young, Jewish, clever, and, though supremely satirical in his glances, not unwilling to be wined. Another accession was a well-known cartoonist, who felt much obliged to these grotesque models for their varied poses under his eye. The hostess amusedly guessed what he had come for, but why should it matter so long as he was here? Still a third guest of real and growing distinction was a young violinist, of whom her majesty, when she introduced him, remarked with a sidelong glance at the fat and mournful Pole: "This gentleman has not lost a Stradivarius—in fact he never had one. Nevertheless, a little

later you shall hear him play." At which the unfortunate Walrus, against whom this badinage was so openly directed, could have wept for envious chagrin.

The queen to-night was in feverish mood. Outwardly, she appeared to be carried away by every vivacious bit of banter and bewitching folly her spritely wit conceived. Unhappy the pseudo-celebrities! Not one but felt the piquancy of her chaff, the quips and lashes of her ready tongue. On the other hand, happier far than their expectations the true lights! Not one but found her flattery the most brilliant and dexterous he had ever known. She was, indeed, a fascinating woman. They would bring their friends.

Yet, inwardly, while all this progressed as it should, her majesty was consumed by so great an anxiety and impatience that only daring and headlong animation could mask her thoughts. Propriety to the four winds! He had not come. "To-morrow we die—"! She was in despair. What cared she for the bow-knotted ribbons and blossoms? What was the use of symbols of innocence if he whose mood they had been worn for kept away. Yes, yes; she had lost. She had given him till ten. It was now eleven. Eat, drink, and be merry—! To the devil with fear.

Springing down at last from her hobby, which was, as we know, scrupulous decorum, she flung the reins to her delighted guests. What more natural, after so reckless a proceeding, than a general fling? What more logically consequent than license?

About the dining-table they crushed and jammed. In the centre stood a large birthday-cake frosted and lighted with a few ironical candles that were soon blown out by the gale of mirth.

Sennacherib was determined to offer a toast. His fellow-courtiers were quite as resolute in preventing him. Now and again, eager to conciliate the oppressor, some

lambkin made bold to bleat encouragement, but the lion-skin wearers roared him down.

So it went from fast to loose, and the punch-bowl was the centre of her universe of stars!

Grievous to relate, it went too far, and the bow-knotted ribbons and artificial blossoms, disarranged in the crush, hinted that possibly the imitation of a débutante was, for once in her life, planetary to the common centre. Sad to relate, excess ensued, not on her part to a noticeable extent (while there's life there's a spark of hope), but in the deportment of others. And the most immoderate of all the gods was the bemoaner of a now deified Stradivarius, who, being at last overcome by grief, jealousy, and innumerable libations, persisted in shortening his ample form still further than usual—even to "all fours," on which, as though desirous of leaving forever a profane world, he ambled under the dining-table.

Some were amused, some shocked, but the queen herself flashed furious. This was too much; this was disreputable! Yet, as hostess, and having, for once in a way, recklessly joined others in an orgy, what could she do on so trying an occasion?

Genuinely bewildered, she did nothing, and so the collapse of the Walrus would soon have been forgotten but for another offended member of the company who had not been reckoned with as he deserved. He, too, was on all fours under the dining-table. Having just risen from a troubled sleep, he naturally felt chagrined at finding his pleasant retreat suddenly invaded by one who, though apparently of his own species, possessed the gigantic proportions of a nightmare. At all events, from under the table now issued a whine or cry so unearthly and terrified that the whole court to a man was thereby struck speechless with amazement. But in another moment, breaking the tense silence, rose the laughter of Dolly herself, full of tinkling mirth and deviltry.

"Oh, oh, oh; it is my dachshund!" Then, beside herself with delight, "Bring him out," she cried, impatiently; "quick, somebody!"

In a minute Bonhomme was in her arms. Her abandonment to recklessness now reached its height. "Take away the punch-bowl."

"No, no!" ejaculated the ex-soprano, who it was previously supposed had lost her voice.

"Never!" exclaimed Sennacherib, with grave emphasis.

"Idiots!" cried Dolly; "put it on the sideboard. I'm going to try an experiment." She pointed to the indiscriminate litter of china and crystal. "Take it all away. Clear the table."

It was quickly done. Those in the dining-room gathered about in wonder and curiosity. Others from the drawing-room, having heard the commotion, stood in a group four or five rows deep, crowding through the doorway.

"Now," said Dolly, mimicking the pomposity of a showman—"now, perhaps, you will see the most exquisitely droll and ludicrous thing in the world—namely, a drunken dachshund. He took to the bowl before any of you. Behold yourselves going home in the morning." At this there was a buzz of surprise, and Dolly put little Bonhomme upon the table. "Stand up—like Sennacherib!" (Subdued sniggers from the audience.)

For a moment the dog stood hesitant, looking at one and another dazedly, then up, with a sort of mute beseechment to her eyes.

"Stand up, sir!"

He tried and failed, tried and failed, then slowly, bewilderedly, rose tottering.

Dolly ran quickly to the other end of the table. "Now, come here."

There was a dead silence. Obediently he attempted

to turn, fell, then stood up once more on his hind-legs, facing her.

"Come here, I tell you."

With halting, uncertain steps he shambled forward, his little paws thrust out obliquely from his sausage-like body, his tail cutting a wide swath, while he staggered towards his adored mistress.

A murmur of approval rose from all, which, no doubt, would have developed quickly into loud applause but for an unexpected interruption.

Suddenly from the rear row of the group which filled the doorway came one word clearly audible above the murmur.

"Disgusting!"

In astonishment every face was turned towards the dining-room. Then, as if to accuse the new-comer and prove themselves innocent of this impudence, those in the doorway parted, leaving the bold speaker conspicuously alone. Dolly, tense under the shock, the finger-nails of one hand scarring her palm, her head thrown back and eyes menacing, gazed at the outspoken guest in fury. He, on his part, answered her look with coldly indignant eyes; next, glancing down in pity at the dachshund, he shuddered and turned away.

Her majesty spoke in a low whisper to the general and one or two others who were near. "Oh, he shall suffer for his insolence." A cruel smile played about the down-turned corners of her mouth. "You shall see him leave here this very evening in the same ludicrous condition as my dog!"

Sennacherib assumed a judicial air, strangely at variance with his present vagueness of expression. "That is jushtish," he declared, scowling after the culprit. "I am great b'liever in dish—in dishipl'arian prinshiples." And the lady of the larynx giggled with delight.

Dolly repaired to the drawing-room. Already sev-

eral were approaching to take their leave. The comic-opera librettist came first. "Your punch is a witch's broth," he told her. "What is the secret of that brew?"

She looked about at the others, and frowned at sight of the broth's results. "I suppose you would call this performance a wild extravaganza."

He smiled ironically, then, yielding to her love of admiration, replied with a graceful mingling of chaff and ardor, "Your majesty's eyes demand something on more tragic lines. The hero should, of course, kill himself in the last act."

The cartoonist joined his friend. "True," he said, seeming as usual to glance everywhere at once, "a dire tragedy!"

Dolly held out her hand. "Come again. There; don't hide your cuff so carefully. I know you have been jotting us all down on it for use in the future. I saw you." He put an arm through the playwright's, and assumed a penitent air. "Well, I confess you've caught me. See."

She glanced down. There, in a few lines, was Sennacherib, his body in the form of a medal, the ribbons of which were tied in a coquettish bow-knot under his beard. There, too, were the pitiful Pole and the long-necked soprano, linking arms with Bonhomme. Dolly laughed delightedly. "And where am I?"

The cartoonist held a hand to his heart with exaggerated passion. "Your majesty is here, not sketched but graven deep, not caricatured but idealized, if that is possible."

As they bowed themselves off, arm in arm, her majesty glanced about comprehensively. Out of the tail of her eye she could see Lloyd standing apart from the rest, waiting for her. Under his arm he held a square parcel. At sight of that her heart fluttered wildly. With what intention had he brought the manuscript? His look

failed to enlighten her. Again she saw the thrill of a battle ahead; already it tightened her nerves and sharpened the wits upon which she must rely for victory. Everything was at stake to-night. In that parcel lay her beloved fame, her chances of success, all her ambition, her hopes—in fact, her entire future.

Quickly she slipped to the anteroom to make sure that the sundry details intrusted to Félice had been carried out. The coal fire should have been laid, but not lighted, an arm-chair before it, a separate bowl of punch on the table near the divan. She recognized the value of scrupulous attention to the stage-settings in each little farce her inventive brain conceived.

Then what was her chagrin when, on entering the anteroom, she found the arm-chair occupied by a newcomer very different from the one for whom she had arranged it. There, on the chair's edge, looking about towards her as she parted the Japanese hangings, sat none other than Matthew Steele.

On noting her annoyance, he smiled with glacial satisfaction. She saw that, by some inexplicable turn of chance, he had regained his calculative look and was perfectly sober.

Of course, to any one else he would have been far less objectionable thus in his right mind — overkeen, perhaps, and utterly devoid of the magnetic humanities, but, nevertheless, a strong business man of sure resource. To her, however, he was at the present moment doubly unpleasant and dangerous.

"I had no idea you had come."

"Evidently."

His tone frightened her. "See here, Matthew, what right have you to assume control of me?"

"Quite as much as you had to do the same with me." His lips were firmer than usual, and above the upper she noticed a rough stubble. He had begun to let his mus-

tache grow again. "I was nearly insane," he continued, calmly. "The drink was too much for me. I hadn't learned the tricks of it." He laughed that old, clipped laugh of his. "Too much milk, I suppose, all these years. Damn the green stuff!" He stepped close to her, heavily masterful. "You taught me the habit."

She laughed nervously. "How absurd! A man of your age knows well enough what he is doing."

"Perhaps so, and perhaps not. Of course, he does in his own line. But didn't I tell you I had led a clean, abstemious life? I made myself that way." He stood up and faced her. "The change has been terrible. If I had drunk a little always it might have been different, but when a man of forty begins"—he bit his pliable under-lip—"God save him!"

She shrugged her shoulders, a motion that caused the rosebud to move restlessly. "Well, you've only yourself to blame. Besides, there's no harm done."

At this he laid a hand heavily on her wrist; she felt the stump of his forefinger press against her flesh. Hitherto it had fascinated her, this the one thing which had always been unusual about him, but now it chilled her to the bone.

"No harm!" he ejaculated. "No harm! Do you know, if I kept on this way I'd soon be ruined? The stuff has got hold of me so fast"—he tightened his own grasp in emphasis—"so fast that I don't look after the office."

Dolly smiled with triumphant reminiscence. "I think you once told me that I was the only woman who could make you forget your business. This is an old story. But what have you been up to in the last few days? What has changed you?" She was genuinely curious. It seemed inconceivable that he should so suddenly have succeeded in mastering the habit.

When he answered her his manner and voice were as

hard as wrought metal. "I'll tell you what I've done. See here!" He took from his breast-pocket a long sheet of paper and held it out to her.

She glanced at it quickly under the hanging lamp. To her surprise it contained nothing but several columns of figures and a few of the terms used by accountants. "What is it?" she asked.

Steele folded the paper. "This is my balance sheet."

Her eyes widened. "Well?"

"My balance sheet," he repeated, calmly. "Last week I told them to strike a balance and make a full statement and bring it to me. When they did so I knew what I was. I knew I was a damned fool." He replaced the paper in his breast-pocket. "This told me so. I've lost thousands in three months. This proved it."

Dolly stood speechless, studying him with a look of wonder—almost awe. Commercialism corporate stood before her—the god of the machine. The ledger was his Bible, figures the commandments by which he lived. Gradually a look of admiration brightened her eyes. In his way he was a genius. His power was greater than her own. Something was in him that could not be reckoned with—one of the first principles of modern life.

"Now, as you've done the thing," said Steele, "you've got to help me, and there's a way."

For a moment she stood crumpling one of the artificial blossoms on her dress in a tight clasp, and her lips moved rapidly without a sound. Then, at last, she raised her head. "It's all right; but come away from here. If you want me to help you, do as I say." She led him through the crowd to the dining-room, now emptied of its revellers, who were following the new violinist with loud, importunate demands, and urging forth to the drawing-room his predecessor of the mournful jowl and quadrupedal propensities, in order, as they said, "to rub it in."

"Well," said Dolly, helplessly, "what can I do? You're all right. It wasn't so bad—"

He interrupted her roughly. "Yes, it was—bad as could be. I've been to a doctor. That's my way. This is the day of professions. When a thing's out of your line, go to the man who understands it. If you're hard up, go to a bank. If you're being done, go to a lawyer. If you're wrong inside, go to a doctor. You've got to do it just as much as you've got to go to an undertaker when you're dead." He laughed again, without a trace of humor. "I went to a specialist. He's straightening me out. He says there are thousands of men who, if they touched a drop, would become drunkards. As it happens, they never have started, and they haven't the slightest idea that the chance of this hell is inside of them. But it's there just the same; it's there in the brain, and when it's there and a man once begins, he's a goner. The doctor says the craving comes and goes and comes again any time. I told him it wouldn't come again in my case, and he said there was no reason it should, but he looked queer—which shows he doesn't know me. When I make up my mind to a thing, I'm all right. That's positive."

Dolly nodded. "I am glad you have done so. You went too far." She was telling herself that, after all, the change was welcome. If ever she had to come to the point and marry him, she could do it now and still have an opulent future.

He bent over her. "Yes, too far, and you did it; so you will have to undo it. I want to get back those thousands, and you can help me."

Dolly was quivering. "How? How?"

"You must give me another book. I am practically sure it will sell. Your name is already made with a large class of readers. The profits will tide me over."

Dolly's face went deadly pale. The situation appalled

her. His fate had suddenly been merged with hers, his future with her future, his chances inextricably tangled with her own. If she failed to procure Lloyd's manuscript to-night she would not even have Steele as a last stand-by. He, too, might be ruined.

"All right," she whispered, breathlessly. "You can depend on me."

"Perhaps I can, and perhaps I can't. In this, maybe, but not in the other way. Tell me, do you intend ever to marry me? You see, I still want you."

She was too excited to resent the brutal calmness with which, at the moment, he managed to cloak his infatuation. "Yes, yes; I swear it. There, now! I've promised on my soul. Yes; I will."

"Meanwhile," he suggested, with a short nod, "perhaps you'll drop that Lloyd boy. Well, anyway, I guess you'll have to. He won't think much of this crowd, now he's struck it so lucky in London."

"In London? Lucky?" Her whisper was agitated; the red rose trembled on her breast.

"Yes; *The Greatest Good*. It has sprung up like a mushroom overnight. Didn't you read the Sunday papers? But what do we care? We're talking about *your* work. We're talking about the mushrooms of Dolly Cohen. I must have one before the summer, or there's no telling what—"

Her eyes danced. "You shall! You shall! This is my birthday—the anniversary of the birth of Dolly Cohen. To-day she is born again. Wait here a minute; I'll come back."

In another moment she was in her bedroom. "Félice, quick—pen, ink, paper!"

When the requisites of her plot were at hand she fell to writing in feverish haste, and soon, with a final flourish, clapped the sheet to a blotter, then folded it with twitching fingers and hid it beneath the rose. Hastening back

to Steele in the dining-room, "Tell me," she asked, impatiently, "are your press-rooms open now? No, I mean the place where they set up type. Don't ask questions. Answer me, will you?—quick!"

Matthew took out his watch. "Till midnight. Yes; there's extra work. One or two compositors—"

"S-sh," she cautioned him, with a furtive glance at the drawing-room. "Do you want a new novel? Very well; you shall have it on one condition. Do what I say, and do it quickly. Not a word to a soul; not a question to yourself. This is a dead secret." She thrust a hand to her bosom. "It's—it's—er—well, it's *under the rose*," she laughed nervously, the bud trembling. "Now listen." She gave him the sheet of note-paper and whispered in his ear. "There," she concluded, "that's all." With dumb bewilderment, he nodded and left her. "No," she whispered, "go out through the pantry, this way."

Gayly she re-entered the drawing-room. Here the newly acquired violinist had just succumbed to the importunate demands of the company. As he began to tune his instrument Dolly looked about for Enoch.

He had disappeared.

Her ears caught a sound of crackling. Alarmed, she darted a glance towards the cane-curtain of the anteroom. Between the beaded reeds she saw a flare from the coals in the grate, over which Enoch on one knee was intently bending.

Distracted with uneasiness, she hastened towards him, parted the hangings, and paused in dismay. At first, although the rattle of the cane-work must have told him of her presence, he pursued the task in hand without looking up to meet her glance. Perhaps he feared to do so. On the hearth she saw a fatally diminished pile of loose and disordered typewritten sheets, from which, with a quick calmness, he fed the fire.

She had come too late.

Scarcely believing her eyes, she stood there for a moment impassively, white as the paper he was burning. The silence of the deed seemed to appall her. A second power greater than her own appeared to control the moment. She called it divine audacity.

Without a word, without a look, he threw the pages, five or six at a time, into the fire he had lighted, while now and again he prodded them with the poker to make certain of their fate.

Even when resource returned, and her fingers tingled and her eyes ravished the remaining pages and her brain was acute with counter-moves, even then she did nothing. The dramatics of the moment appealed to her. The hush and the scene and the act appealed to her, even in this vital extremity.

Without a word, without a look, Enoch mechanically stoked the fire. The white pile on the hearth grew constantly smaller; the black pile in the grate grew constantly larger. He was stoking the fire of his genius—the fire of life.

To her the act was as awful as a crime would have been to an angel. Nevertheless, she smiled. She was witnessing a divine comedy, whose characters were the elements of being. How diverting, for once in a way, to stand near the centre of existence and listen to the heart-beat of life! How droll!

Still silent and automatic, the stoker stuck to his work. Though he could not but have known how close she stood to him, he gave no sign of notice. Though she stood so near at the last that her head and shoulders, backed by the hanging lamp, threw a shadow across him, he continued to ignore her presence.

Her fingers moved restlessly at her side, but her brain, always complex with under-thoughts, found naught to its taste—naught, in fact, within its capacity, to prompt

any overt action. She might have attempted a quick theft on her entrance, but she would not have succeeded. Nor would subterfuge and a play for delay have availed her. She had come too late. For once she was met by something inevitable, something inexorable, a destiny. The mere mechanism with which he was destroying his incubus impressed this realization strongly on her mind. A wild impulse she might have combated, but this—no! And so she stood there dumb as he, waiting.

Throwing to the blaze the final pages, Lloyd rose to his feet and faced her with a smile of triumph. "I beg your pardon for keeping you waiting, but it took some time to cremate Mr. Hyde."

She, too, smiled—smiled sweetly. "What a solemn scene! How sad! I call it really tragic. It will take you so long to resurrect him." She straightened the rose at her bosom, then looked up again with quiet assurance. "Yet this is exactly what my dear Lord Executioner must very soon start to do. I need a book before the summer, and the royal mandate shall never, never, *never* be disobeyed!"

XII

Hecate's Brew

ENOCH'S eyes were wide with amazement. It seemed impossible to withhold admiration from a personality so audaciously buoyant. "I believe you would meet even actual death," he told her, in wonder, "with an air." He was experiencing a feeling of ineffable relief. The fact that he had at last acted with finality, and that *Ashes of Roses* was now mere ashes of paper, left no room in his mind for doubt. Her words had little effect. His entire soul was feeding, so to speak, on the triumph, and as it fed it loafed comfortably and grew more mellow, more genial, more magnanimous towards his victim—more at ease. He felt really sorry for the Queen of Bohemia, whose brief little reign he had so abruptly terminated. He could now afford to be generous, and even to console her. "You would even die with an air," he repeated, seating himself in the arm-chair.

Dolly was moving about behind him. "Perhaps you are right. It's the best way." Pausing near the hangings, she nodded encouragement to the violinist, then softly closed the door and lowered the light of the lamp above them. With a laugh she sank to the arm of his chair. "Yes, yes; it's by far the best way. Death offers us the most splendid opportunity we can ever have to prove our pluck. Meet him, say I, with a laugh and a joke. Dieu de Dieu, I'd laugh at him even if he tortured me. Laughter is the salvation of the world; tears damn it. Oh, you pretty boy, what do you know of life,

anyway?" She took his hand, which he, being embarrassed into a kind of indulgence after the blow he had dealt, made no immediate attempt to withdraw. "Oh, my Angel, what do you know of the sublime possibilities of laughter? It rings like a bell in my heart, a tiny, crystal bell, the mere tinkle of which again and again saves me from desperation." She stroked his palm gently. "Oh, I hope it will tinkle when death comes to pay me a visit. Then I shall say, 'Bonjour, M'sieur Death. Comment ça va, m'sieur?' And I shall make him want me all the more, but I shall laugh him off as I do with so many visitors—you, for example." Her eyes sparkled. "Yes; *you* are my Death—my Death at the present moment." She laughed aloud, her laughter blending with a lively air which the player in the drawing-room had just begun on his violin. "And that is how I greet you. Bonjour, M'sieur Death. Have a glass of punch. Here, you shall act the part!"

Springing up quickly, she filled him a glass overbrimming, then one for herself, and stood before him, all on the qui vive with the piquancy of her little comedy.

Her dash and her daring original strain could not but appeal to Enoch. It caught his fancy like a scene on the stage — like a vivid scene in a book, and he yielded, at first merely subjectively, to the unusual entertainment. Taking his glass, he bowed and drank in a serious manner, as the rôle demanded.

"Holà, M'sieur Death!" she cried. "Many have wanted me, none has won me. This is the truth. There's not a man in the world can boast in his heart that his lips have ever touched mine. That's true; call it what you will. I swear it, m'sieur, upon my soul!" She glanced at the prie-dieu, as though to solemnize her oath. "Why is it so? No wonder you ask. I don't look it, do I, even in snow-white chiffon and bows and blossoms? No? Well, well, qui sait? It's all a mystery. There's some-

thing in me that says 'no.' In the Latin Quarter they used to call me 'La P'tite qui Refuse.' So I was; so I am. It's a great power. Balzac tells us what a great power it is in Cousin Bette. Of you, M'sieur Death, I am not afraid—one bit! Again I refuse. Once more I say 'no.' Oh, là-là-là; it is to laugh!" She sank again to the arm of Lloyd's chair. "Here, M'sieur Death, your glass is empty. We'll drink from the same cup. It's very appropriate." She held her glass to his lips, but he kept them closed, coldly. It was one thing to drink from his own glass, quite another from hers. There seemed to be a startling difference. And the second tune of the violinist, a far less vivacious melody, disturbed his mind. He pushed the glass away.

"Oh, very well," said Dolly; but he saw her wince. With a peculiar blending of earnestness and banter, a tragi-farcical tenderness and devilry in her eyes, she bent close to him till their breaths mingled, then with a flout drew back and tossed down the ruby liquid. "Do you know, I've been playing the fool to-night, and it's you who made me do it. I've been almost vulgar—even coarse! Perhaps this is the real I, the true myself that you've awakened. I don't care to-night what happens. See; the chiffon and blossoms are crumpled! I've been drinking as never before. 'Eat, drink, and be merry,' you told me. Well, I've done it, and I don't care. Somehow, I'm stronger to-night than I've ever been. I'm more powerful. Perhaps it's because I'm real. No, no; don't move. See; I'm not so terribly near you." She pretended to frown in order to hide the fact that she felt like doing so. "Remember, I'm not accustomed to being avoided." She stirred restlessly. "Now, listen. I'm going to tell you something. I'm going to show you yourself. You came here in a vacillating mood. You were positively at your wits' end. You came to parley. You were undecided. Of course, you were dying to be

rid of the book, but you didn't dare to destroy it. Then, as luck would have it, you saw Bonhomme tipsy on the dining-table, and me tormenting him before them all. The scene disgusted you. A sort of creature-instinct in you cried out against my cruelty. You felt sorry for Bonhomme. Where principle had failed, the sight of a drunken dog decided you. That's your nature to a T. You are very impressionable. Ergo, you burned the manuscript." She sat back with a knowing nod and smiled.

He bit his lip. "How do you know I had not decided? You jump at conclusions, like all women."

Dolly laughed. "Like all women? What do you know of women? Nothing whatever. No, no; I never jump at conclusions. I've learned life by living, and I've read a great deal. Now, reading, if you know how to discriminate, is the second-best teacher in the world, and even if, like me, you don't know how, there's lots to be learned from almost anything that's written." Her manner was lightly discursive—mischievously so. "For instance, take the Sunday papers—"

Lloyd started perceptibly.

"What's the matter?" she asked, as though surprised. "You're pale as a ghost. We're only having a nice little literary chat. How foolish of you! Well, as I was going to say, the Sunday papers, of course, are filled with trash, and yet they are sprinkled with information. Do you know I fairly dote on the Sunday papers?" Her voice was low, amused, and insinuating. "Don't you? But no; of course not. I suppose you hate the very name of trash." She had leaned her cheek against the edge of the chair's back, and was swinging her feet inconsequently.

Enoch started to rise in rough anger, as if with a desperate desire to throw this new incubus after the old one.

"No, no," she said, and, stretching out her hand to

the opposite arm of the chair, she barred his way. "Not yet. Oh, now, *now* you should have a tinkling bell in your heart, so that you could laugh even at yourself as the case demands. But why shouldn't you laugh? What do the Sunday papers say? They tell us that the name of Enoch Lloyd is already famous."

He sighed heavily and relaxed, with silent admission.

"Enoch Lloyd," pursued Dolly; "a famous name—a distinguished name. How different from Dolly Cohen!"

"Stop!" exclaimed Enoch. "Why do you torture me?"

To his surprise, her eyes grew suddenly dim with moisture, while for a moment she said nothing. Then, "Poor boy," she whispered; "it's all for your own good. Now, *do* take my advice and you'll be happy. There's not the slightest need of exposure. Of course, you can't afford to have the thing known, now that your name is famous. That would be suicidal. You would not only murder Dolly, but you would kill yourself—your true self. Listen. There's a way of escape. Both selves must live—yes, *both*. It is really the only way. You will continue to write for Matthew Steele—*and* for Stephen Lee. Mr. Lee will doubtless press you soon for another novel. Well and good. He shall have one. It will even surpass *The Greatest Good*. And as for me—why, *I* shall be the very first to wish Enoch Lloyd success when he follows his best ambition. You may not think so, but I give you my word. I can appreciate your idealism. There's a world of good in me, somewhere, down deep, but also there's a world of wisdom. Before the summer you must write another book as Dolly Cohen. Keep it harmless, if you like—less dangerous than *Ashes of Roses*. If necessary, you can even work on both books at the same time. Divide your hours. Give a few to the mere mechanical work for Steele, and the rest to your creative genius." She stood up with an air of frank good-will. "You see, my dear, impractical dreamer, you jump from

one extreme to the other. That's always unwise. Be moderate. Go back to your hermitage in Bristol, if you like, and keep on with your beautiful dreams. Don't conjure up senseless nightmares."

Lloyd was staring at the coals with haunted eyes. Long he sat there, while Dolly moved about behind him. Long he sat, and finally mulled it over, considering her well-expressed suggestion, and wondering if it could be done, and hating himself for the wonder. Meanwhile, the violinist made his music, and the sound of his instrument, like the far-off song of a woman, floated softly to their ears. Lloyd was thinking of another music, the music of a voice like a violin. He was thinking, too, of another hearth, another fire.

At last he shook his head. Once again home truths and the unequivocal adages of a never-amendable code came to the rescue. "No man can serve two masters." "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon." Yes, yes; it would be impossible to blend the two selves within him. Yet it had come to this: either he must attempt to do so or he must murder the lower, even if, as she said, by so doing he annihilated the higher from the world's esteem. When Hyde died, Jekyll died also. Apparently the incubus was on him still. It had not been contained in a mere bundle. There was something else he must grapple with, something abstract and more to be feared.

He rose to his feet with a look of dull power. "I refuse," he said, simply, and Dolly laughed. He started for the door.

"No; don't go," she said, with apparent unconcern, but in reality hard put to it to gain time. "Don't go." She stood before the door. "I can't let you. If this is the end, M'sieur Death, I still can be merry. Yes; you are Death—my Death. I sha'n't be half as afraid to face Death himself as I am to face the exposure of to-morrow."

"To-morrow," echoed Enoch, shuddering.

"Yes, or the next day. It's got to come. I hate you more than I love you—God's truth! But I love myself yet more, and it's myself that's going to suffer." Tossing her head, she laughed aloud with rippling melody. "Nevertheless, thank Heaven, I still do that. You see, I still can laugh. The crystal bell in me tinkles even while you, M'sieur Worse-than-Death, are killing me. Well, well; we die together. You are a second—who was it?—yes, my Angel, you are a second Sardanapalus." She was talking against time, and the peculiar, tinselled brilliance of her language held him. The blood of the French poet had certainly dribbled down to her. "A second Sardanapalus! About you and your consort," she pursued, in a voice of half-real, half-mock heroics, "the palace of your hope is burning. We stand in the midst of the flame, together." For once she was improvising, instead of quoting with only a feigned spontaneity some earlier coup of effect. "This is a conflagration of the soul—a conflagration set to music. Listen." The voice of the violin, at the far end of the drawing-room, could be heard faintly. Now and again it rose, as if in a human cry. "Thus I have him fiddle," smiled Dolly, "while *we* burn. That's what I call Neronian. But even Nero could not have done that. He fiddled only while others were being cooked. And yet, listen. We cry aloud in the flame." . . .

She broke off suddenly and laughed and laughed, till her whole body had become, as it were, a gesture of burlesque. "What arrant idiocy! I believe I am stark mad." She started, and gazed at him wonderingly. "Or else I'm as much a genius as you. Your genius is in me. That's it! I share the spark in common with you. And this is the spark that starts our palace burning."

She paused. A light rap had sounded on the door behind her. Instantly her tightened nerves relaxed with relief, but she appeared only to wonder who had dared

to interrupt their tête-à-tête. She opened the door indignantly.

There stood Félice, holding out a long envelope. "Pardon, ma'm'selle, but this is from Mr. Steele's office, and the messenger will not go. He says it is very urgent, as the magazine is going to press. He wants it approved."

Through the open doorway, from the far end of the drawing-room, came the strains of the violin, louder and more loud. The new virtuoso, a true master, was playing at the moment in quick agitato. It seemed as though his heart and the heart of his instrument had suddenly gone wild together. The music suggested a masque of the Furies, low in air.

Dolly nodded to Félice, took the envelope, and closed the door. The music was hushed; the Furies were apparently appeased. Tearing open the flap, she drew out a roll of long and narrow sheets, which Lloyd immediately recognized as the galley-proofs of a printer. "Oh," she said, "this is my article for the April number of *The Crowd*." She unrolled the proofs slowly and drew off the topmost sheet, taking care to conceal the face of the next, which, like all beneath it, was devoid of a single letter. Of course, she had not had time to write the article in two minutes, but a roll of blank galley-slips, if handled carefully, would be exceedingly convincing. Besides which, the topmost strip was a genuine proof-sheet. The two minutes in her dressing-room had sufficed for the composition of an appropriate heading to the article. "This is a proof," she laughed, handing it to him, "of her majesty's resolve."

He read the clear capitals again and again:

"A JEKYLL AND HYDE IN LITERATURE.
STRANGE CASE OF A DUAL IDENTITY."

"(The following remarkable confession serves to illustrate forcibly the old saying that truth is stranger than fiction.)"

Lloyd's glance wandered vaguely about the room till it rested at last on the table near the divan. Then, to her surprise and delight, he appeared to be seized by a sudden, unprecedented impulse. Making straight for the table where stood the punch-bowl, he tossed down two glassfuls of her concoction in quick succession. His hand shook. "Show me the rest of it; show me the worst."

"No, no; you will see it in a few days, when the magazine comes out."

"Give it to me." He was staring at the clear capitals of the page in hand.

She said nothing, in order not to emphasize her refusal. But her silence produced an undesirable effect. He tore up the slip and dropped the scraps from his trembling fingers, then advanced on her with a dull, slow purpose. In another instant he shot out his hand towards the roll in hers. Eluding him, she started for the door. He stepped before it and vowed he would have the paper. Thereupon she laughed again immoderately, crossed to the hearth, and flung the precious proof-sheets into the fire, where, with a poker, she prodded them deep between two live coals.

Then she turned with scoffing eyes. "How absurd you are! What does it matter? The thing is in type. Burning the proofs makes no difference. They've been read, of course, for mere typographical errors. All I have to do is to send word they need no correction. There's no necessity of returning the sheets themselves. Funny you didn't think of that, isn't it?"

Lloyd pulled himself together as best he could. When he had burned the manuscript there had seemed to be a sure finality in the act, yet now that he had caused her similarly to burn the proofs of his duplicity the deed meant nothing. He was vainly seeking to destroy in-

destructible testimony against him. The type still stood, and soon the presses would print and the world would know. Marion would hear.

He listened for the voice of the violin, as if now in need of its cadences. It was silent. His thoughts ran on without even the amelioration of a chance accompaniment.

Yes, the type still stood, and soon the presses would print and the world would know. Marion would hear. Marion! Marion!

The clear capitals of the heading which was to tell the public of Enoch Lloyd and Dolly Cohen seemed to be printed on his brain. Once more a material object pivoted his character and set it teetering betwixt good and ill. If the sight of the dog had brought him a righteous impulse, the sight of those capital letters weakened him into even considering the expediency of surrender. Although he had foreseen what sort of an article she would write, although he had imagined the sensational style of her so-called confession—a confession that would surely ruin them both—he had been able to close his mind to the bare fact until now, now when it stared him in the face—cold print! She had read his nature with singular acuteness. Despite his visionary way he needed something definite to lead him. In spite of his now famous flights into an abstract philosophy, concrete objects worked with remarkable power on his impressionable temperament—especially so if they were flashed on him suddenly and could be used as a means by which to penetrate the vapors wherein he managed to screen his soul. Yes, she had read him aright. When again he had recourse to the witch's broth, she felt certain of the victory.

"Then Steele knows." The comment came in a dull voice from the vicinity of the punch-bowl, into which he gazed unseeingly, as though striving to read beneath the

ruby surface the true ingredients in the witch's caldron. With a smile this dark Hecate watched him. She was recalling the weird spell-chant of her prototype.

"Eye of newt and toe of frog,
Wool of bat and tongue of dog."

The grotesquely infernal recipe greatly diverted her fancy.

"For a charm of powerful trouble
Like a hell-broth boil and bubble."

She laughed softly to herself. "No, Matthew Steele is ignorant of it. I've left out one paragraph till the very last moment. It's not yet set up. As the story is told, it leaves our identity in doubt. I've omitted names. But this final paragraph, which I'm going to send down by the messenger, is quite enough: 'The author who has thus debased his art has suddenly grown famous in England.' That, you see, will make it plain as day—dark as night. *Now*, what do you say?"

"I say that Steele will not allow such an article to go out of his office. The thing is a libel."

She shook her head with indulgent pity, as though really sorry for the grasper at straws. "Oh, he won't stop it. His brain is muddled nowadays. He's drunk with absinthe and infatuation—the poor March Hare." She started to leave. "Excuse me a second. I must give them the final paragraph."

She opened the door and paused for an instant on the threshold. Why did she hesitate, he wondered, and she, too, asked herself that question. Was it only because she could not face the gibes of the popular weekly and of all the rest who would be laughing in their sleeves at Dolly Cohen, the thief of fame? Or was it— Yes, perhaps so. His very presence seemed to make her play

the fool. Away with such weakness, such despicable folly! Sooner or later it would tell on her nerves.

She crossed the threshold.

"Stop," said Enoch, in a low voice.

She turned back to him.

"I will do as you suggest," he told her, in the toneless accents of a struggle for self-control. "If I don't before the summer, you can tell the world." His eyes were vague with the stuff of her brewing. His lips continued to move after he had spoken. He swayed.

She smiled on him with charming beneficence. "You promise?"

"Yes."

"On your honor?"

"If I don't, you can expose me."

"Then kneel at the prie-dieu."

"Never! What blasphemy!"

"You are wrong," she muttered; "an oath is sacred." But she did not insist. Perhaps she dimly recognized the infamy of her suggestion, or more probably she considered it inexpedient to offend what she termed his "verdant sensibilities."

Lloyd stood looking at her from the corner near the bowl of punch. The fulness of life had left him. Perhaps it was never before in his existence at so low an ebb as in that moment. He had quailed before the stigma. The capitals proclaiming him a swindler were cast in his soul. The pride of his entire being had shrunk from the threatened wound. Seemingly he was now overridden by the powers of darkness; the fair, white hosts had left him to his fate. His eyes swam with misery. He was draining the dregs of his bitterness—the lees of wrong. And this, together with the actual intoxicant, almost unmanned him. This and Hecate's brew seethed in his brain. He swayed unsteadily—alas! a pitiable object, punished, the world might have said, beyond his due.

But, dimly, he himself knew better. In his depths he acknowledged the justice of Heaven. He alone could estimate the fall. He knew what he might have been, he knew what he was, and he wanted to drown that knowledge.

Dolly pushed an electric bell. Instantly Félice appeared. "See Mr. Steele yourself. Tell him it is all a mistake. My article must on no account appear. Tell him *I* say so." With a nod Félice withdrew, and her mistress, closing the door, locked it.

Dolly turned about in a transport of delight. Enoch contrived a smile to prove himself without a pang. Abandoning her mind to relief, his conqueror dropped to the divan. Her victim stood over her unsteadily. If he had sold himself to the devil he would make the best of his purchaser. A new-come spirit of evil in him egged him on to excess. He had gone so far, why not go farther? Everything was beautiful, even the wrong. He laughed at her crushed blossoms. His eyes, seeming to delight in the dishevelment of her pure white chiffon, suggested a nature now recklessly dishevelled, too. He combed back his hair with his fingers, then pulled it down to his eyebrows. Dolly was bewitched by the metamorphosis. The unkempt bang changed him amazingly. Nevertheless, he maintained a ponderous gravity. He was fighting for a steadier balance, but his brain swam. Never before had his reason reeled. Now that the fierce moot question had been disposed of, only two facts remained in his mind. Deep in him he felt the fear of a terrible loss. This very evening he had all but lost his ideal, her whom he had once called the savior of his hope. Almost, he had sacrificed her respect and his own with it. So said his brain, with exaggerated remorse. The memory of that mad forfeiture was driving him even madder than the act, for here, in the place of the thing sacrificed, he had gained something else. He had gained

another woman's passion. Another woman? Oh, God; his brain must, indeed, be reeling to couple those two together! . . . And yet this little sorceress was by no means really bad. She was not of the kind he had always avoided. No one could convict her of evil. O'Brien and Steele had told him so. His youth seemed to be caught by the fact of her actual innocence. She was, in a way, an anomaly, an exception most dangerous to a man of his age and nature.

Perhaps never till now had Dolly so keenly appreciated her advantage over other women of the night. Possibly it was for this very moment that she had said "no" so often.

Softly from the drawing-room came once more the voice of the violin, but now in low, sensuous allurement.

Could she have planned this whole accompaniment? Had she foreseen each successive phase? Probably yes. There was no trick, no magic, no proof of prescience he would not, in his present obscure condition, have ascribed to her acumen. He smiled. Her majesty was so theatric. She evidently was never contented without the accessories, and an appropriate mise-en-scène. Her majesty! He laughed to himself at the title. His clouded intelligence was slowly being colored with ludicrous impressions, as though the comic cartoonist had come and daubed them on his mind.

He held up his glass and gazed at it with an endeavor after easy freedom. When he emptied it he laughed aloud. "Your majesty," he asked, thickly, "what would you?"

She thrust her hands to her hair and rumpled it in sheer abandon, then raised her sensuous arms to him and whispered, "I want your love. I want you — *you!* I love you. Give me a little in return. Oh, boy—*boy*— I do love you."

Gradually her influence gained ground. Now that it

no longer stood for a menace, the sorcery of the enchantress was brought into full play. It seemed to be the very shadows of her hair and eyes that tried to ravish him—the very midnight of their depths.

Gradually the strains of the violin and the liquid fire of her brew got into his veins and into his soul. He knew little. The moment was utterly unreal.

But suddenly, when he was leaning closer, he started, drew back, and uttered an all but inaudible moan. As if lit up by a flash of lightning, sharp and vivid amid the chaos of his brain, he seemed to see Marion standing again before him, swaying like a flame in a wind.

Dolly raised her arms to him. He staggered back. The mental picture had broken her spell. This and the voice of that sure life in him, which, though now at so low an ebb, was yet assertive, availed to guard him from a mortal degradation.

Turning, he unlocked and opened the door and fled headlong through the drawing-room to the hall, so blindly that the guests believed him insane with drinking. One and all they stared after him in contemptuous curiosity The lambs looked frightened, as though fearing a similar fate. The Snark giggled behind her fan. The Walrus, who had been compelled to sit and listen to his rival, tried in vain to smile. Nobody showed the slightest sympathy—save one. This was Bonhomme. Cocking an eye after the miserable, lurching figure, he seemed to consider the case and soon to understand the meaning of the stagger. Lifting his nose towards the ceiling, he uttered a prolonged whine.

Dolly emerged from her sanctuary. When the door closed behind her captive she nodded to Sennacherib, as who should say, "I've kept my word and punished him."

"Shaprishti!" exclaimed the befuddled hero. "Bravish'mo!" And the lady of the larynx tittered the more.

Dolly's smile bespoke triumph tinged with bitterness, but the bitterness was lost on their soggy brains. Her courtiers laughed boisterously at the expense of the guest thus fittingly sped, and clapped their hands in applause. Rushing to the piano, the bubbling Herr Wunderlich loudly struck up "Hail, Columbia!" much to the general delight.

The laughter and clapping and hammered music followed Enoch long and persistently, as though the medley had awakened an echo in his ears.

Through the midst of their mockery rang the sound of that thin, unhuman cry—the dog's whine.

"You're a trump," said Dolly to Steele, as they sat apart in the dining-room. "I really believe I love you. So you brought back the proof yourself." She was looking down into a lavender pasteboard box trimmed with ribbons. In a moment she tipped her chair back and daintily munched a rectangular morsel of nougat. "I really believe I love you."

Matthew frowned jealously. "You'd better drop him for good. And where did you find this violinist? I'm no judge, that's sure; but they say he is really a marvel. Now, why should he come here? He's above this crowd."

Dolly laughed, and, grisette-like, licked her fingers. "Oh, that's all right. *I paid him!*"

Book IV

I

Two Masters

WHEN the spring came to Bristol it brought the Lees. Like the blossoms and wild flowers, feathered visitors, foliage, and all other tokens of sunshine, they seemed an inherent part of the season. When the shutters of the long, white house were open, summer was not far off. People watched their advent much as they regarded the coming of the fish-hawk—Rhode Island's best-loved bird—with a ready welcome from the heart. What if they lived aloof near the shore? So did the fish-hawks. What if they shunned the town? Spring, too, was somewhat shy of it.

One morning, early in May, when spring no longer hinted of summer, but heralded her coming, Marion stood in the orchard receiving the advance retinue of the year's queen. She was listening to the songs of the equerries in air, the camping of outriders in the leafage. She was watching courtiers come, or seem to come, through the fields and up the slope—violets, buttercups, Bethlehem stars—a fine array, with the hosts of grass all bending towards her under the breeze, as if in approach and homage. But Marion's eyes seemed to greet the elfin ambassadors as though she were the lowliest of their sovereign's subjects, and yet with a look of passionate allegiance. Whatever there was of motley in the orchard—brazen dandelions, pompous robins, blossom-enfilleted satyrs and Pans—she saw this spring for the first

time. Humor had come to her ken of the earth. Nature was growing more intimate. The earth was becoming the world. It inspired the smile of a familiar, not only the prayer of a devotee.

The night before had been cold and foggy—winter's ghost returning to haunt spring. This morning that ghost was laid; the fog had receded to the sea; the sun shone. There was not a cloud in the blue.

Somehow, there was more liberality, more breadth, more all-embracing fulness of life in the love she was giving her primordial mother. Yes, the earth was becoming the world. The dwellings of the soul are three in succession: the earth, the world, the sky. In each there is something of the other. Of course, there was much of heaven here on earth, and better yet, she told herself with a very human daring, better yet, there would be things of the earth in heaven.

From which it will be seen that Marion considered her present abiding-place—this court of aërial outriders, violets, buttercups, Bethlehem stars—an exceedingly satisfactory habitation, no less so, but all the more so, because of its great, free humor, its humanity evinced in the strutting robin and rollicking, blossom-chapleted orchard; its gayety as well as its gravity, its humanity as well as its divinity; in short, this eternal medley, beautiful, ugly, tragic, humorous, all-comprehensive, incomprehensible, the divine What-is-it, which by but one race on one small planet is called life.

She was now in nature almost a woman. Therefore, when the message Arcadian was followed that morning by a message human, she lent not only ears to the messenger but a heart as well.

At the old stone dock—that dock where her boat and her memory strained together at their moorings—Ezra Slocum, the light-ship's master, had left his skiff. She saw the crotchety old molluscan approaching by the

lane. Once before he had come to her thus on a warm, fair morning, and in his hand he had borne a letter. She knew its words by heart. "You will be my muse," it had told her, in conclusion, "encouraging and uplifting me to higher endeavor always. You can do that—your eyes can, your voice can, your mind and spirit can—then do! I need you. I seem to exist only for your answer. Enoch Lloyd."

Yes, she remembered every word. They were all moored fast at the dock of memory. And here again was Ezra Slocum coming from the shore.

With a look of wonder she went to meet him at the orchard gate. They talked across the rails, she leaning on the topmost, he standing in the lane, first on one foot, then on the other, uneasy and perplexed. For several minutes he hemmed and hawed and nodded and welcomed her back, his tongue fidgeting with his quid, his sunken eyes evading the clear, large pair that studied him. But Marion indulged his irrelevancies with a good grace, knowing this much of native, shore-dwelling New-Englanders: though they speak slowly, they speak out. If they come with something to say, they say it before they go.

In this she was not wrong. The visit of Slocum confirmed her perception. For a time, however, he must needs procrastinate with talk of himself and his own trouble.

"Yas, I'm right enough in health," he told her, in reply to her interest, "but in mind not so good—*partly* owing to the light-ship. They're goin' to move her away."

"What!" exclaimed Marion; "but won't—"

"Oh yas, they'll have a light thar jest the same—a stationary light-house built on the shoals. It's cheaper, says Uncle Sam, and the ship's wore out. So will I be soon, mebbe. But it's kinder hard, though they say ez how I'll git the new light ef I want it."

"Of course," said Marion—"of course you will."

"Mebbe so," pursued the old cuttle-fish, grumpily, "but you see now why I'm outer sorts—or *partly* you do."

"How do you mean 'partly'?" she queried, growing slightly uneasy herself, or no imaginable cause.

"I mean," replied Slocum, at last—"I mean I be here to tell you Mr. Lloyd hez come."

Marion started, flushing visibly. "Did he send—"

Ezra eyed her drooping lashes. "No, but I thought 's how I'd got to tell you—the reason bein'—bein'—wal, I thought it 'd be good ef you could see the boy!" He tightened his leathery lips and smiled at her. "Thar now, I've said it!" With which emphatic expression of relief the light-ship's master turned upon his heel.

"Captain Slocum," called Marion.

For an instant he hesitated without turning back, then walked away from her. Evidently he was no respecter of persons, and quite as evidently he might have said much more.

Swinging open the gate, Marion joined him, smothered her pride, and walked beside him down the lane. "When did Mr. Lloyd return?"

"Three days ago."

Marion glanced at the Mount Hope shore. "But I have seen no light," she meditated, aloud, "and not a sign of him."

Slocum again shook his head. " 'Course you heven't. Thet's it. Thar beunt any light, nur any sign. I've laid eyes on him only jest once—lars night it were. That's why I come over here this mornin'." He stopped and turned to her shortly. "You're a friend of his'n, ain't you?"

She inclined her head.

"A good friend?" Slocum made bold to ask.

"Yes."

"Wal, I jedged ez much by him sending you the letter which I carried here lars summer. And you, when you read it, lookin' so—but thet don't matter. Leastwise, it ain't to be spoken of." He, too, glanced across the cove, then beckoned her aside to the shade of the trees mysteriously. "I wouldn't like him to see me talkin'. Mebbe he'll be out in his skiff, but I don't guess so."

Marion seated herself on the low, rambling stone wall beside the lane, but even before he had spoken she was on her feet again. Something compelled her to stand. "Is there anything wrong?"

Slocum's wizened brow was lined with innumerable wrinkles. "Yas 'n' no—mostly yas, I jedge, now I've seen him. Lars night he rowed up to the light-ship and come aboard. 'Wal, Enoch, boy,' says I; 'by cracky! you here?' but he never smiled—which ain't him, or warn't." The light-ship's master shifted his quid and his balance, looking up at the apple-trees as though wishing he could pick his words therefrom, then down in silence helplessly. So tortuous are the ways of speech to a born molluscan. Nevertheless, he floundered on persistently in behalf of his idol, and as he talked, his peculiar crabbed love for Enoch gave him a certain facility seldom possible till now. It was as though the thousand knots were suddenly untied.

"Yes, suthin' is wrong—thet's what, or I don't know him. Wal, it war five minutes agin ten o'clock when he come aboard, and he stayed till near mornin'. But most of the time what does he do—him as used to be so cocky and gaylike? He walks the deck and shivers in the fog—a kind of marchin' ghost—and looks up and looks down and says nothin', till suddenly he stops in front of me. 'Do you like this work?' he asks. 'Do you like this shiftin' about with the tide and botherin' with the light night after night, year in year out—so lonely? Do you like goin' on a voyage at anchor, never getting any-

whar? Do you like it? Now tell me.' 'Wal, now,' says I, 'what's the matter? I do and I don't. Suppose I do? What would you say? Suppose I don't—what then? You seem to take it terrible earnest.'

"'Yas—earnest,' says he, in a voice like you never heerd, a kind of heart-breakin' voice. 'Terrible earnest. Do you like hearin' the wind raise hell at night, and the sea worse 'n hell? Do you like this blindin' fog, these walls of gray nothin'ness?' Them were his own words. 'Walls of gray nothin'ness. Do you like bein' shifted about unsteady—pointin' every which way?'

"'Wal,' says I, 'this shiftin' seems to be on your mind. Now don't trouble about Ezra Slocum. The light-ship's goin' to be towed away,' says I, 'and a little, round house here on the rock instead of it—a house right out here in the water, and me in it!'

"'What,' says he, 'a house?' Then he laughs, acid-like. 'You're in luck, thet's what. You're dead in luck. No more rockin' and shiftin'. You'll be steady as a church. No tides nur currents swingin' you round,' says he. 'No weak imitation of a voyage,' says he, in them words. 'No make-believe.'

"Then up and down the deck he goes marching ag'in, like a lonesome, lost soul, as gray as the fog, till I thought he'd never stop. But he did. Suddenly he halts in front of me and his voice was different. 'Ezra,' he says, 'do you remember how I used to come out here when I war a kid and tend light for you?'

"'I do thet,' says I. 'You war mate, you said, and I said you war the best mate as ever come aboard, I did, which you war for a youngster.'

"At that he looks up at the light a moment, then he kinder smiles, rememberin'-like, and he says, 'Ezra, turn into your bunk. I'll do it once more, I will—like then.'

"'Mebbe you'd fall asleep,' says I, doubtful.

"'Asleep?' he laughs, sourish. 'Not I. Sleep? I don't do that much these nights.'

"'The light's glass,' says I, 'needs a heap of watching. It gets clouded with the heat inside and the cold out, and the fog's thet thick it don't show up good unless thar's a man sent up to clean it.'

"But he on'y smiles and nods and shoves me off. 'I'll send one up,' says he, 'if need be.'

"Wal, I seed it war on his mind to do it, and I thought ez how he'd feel better bein' a boy ag'in, so I turned in, and he kep' on marchin'."

Slocum paused, blinked, and hesitated.

"Well?" said Marion in a whisper.

The old man turned as if with a sudden impulse to go and leave the rest untold.

"No, no," objected Marion, "tell me."

He stood in the lane looking off in the direction of the light-ship till at last the vividness of the episode proved too much for him, and he recalled it aloud. "By ginger, what a row it war! I woke quick. The crew and captain of a big three-master was all a-cursin' when I come out. I seed them jumpin' about helter-skelter. She war a big un, bound for Fall River with a load of coal, and she run near dead on us—thet's what! I looked at the light. Wal, my name ain't Ezra Slocum if 'twarn't so dingy you couldn't scarcely see it from whar I stood. The glass war all covered with sweat. Up forward I hear Enoch calling to the men, crazified. 'Come up,' says he, 'they're wrecked! Good God, they're wrecked!' And the crew come tumblin' up, and the other crew cursed their lazy hides, and said they'd report us to the Government. But they was clear of the shoal, and I knowed it. Wal, sir, what did Mr. Lloyd do? He come up to me and he says, says he, 'Ezra,' he says, 'shoot me! I'm no use, no earthly use,' he says.

"'Bad luck! I guess you was asleep,' says I, try-

in' to be cross, which I never couldn't with him, nohow.

"'Asleep!' he says. 'No, I warn't. I war doin' nothin' but thinkin'. I clean forgot. I guess my brain's all wrong,' says he. Them was his very words— 'My brain's all wrong lately.'

"'You tended light better,' I says, 'when you was twelve.'

"He nodded, and looked ez how he could 'most 'a' cried like a baby.

"'Yas, I did; yas, I did,' he 'lowed, with a kind of a sigh like a sob.

"'Wal,' says I, 'it's all right now. They're back in the channel, sure enough. But I calc'late,' says I, '*you* ain't.'

"'No,' says he; 'I ain't. The light's blurred. The light's near invisible,' he says; 'and somethin's cursin' me like that captain. Oh, Ezra,' says he; then he turns about, and, never sayin' good-night, he slides down to his skiff and disappears in the fog."

His narrative finished, the old man jerked up his hand in a gesture forbidding comment.

Small need. Marion, turning in silence, walked slowly up the lane.

"Remember, you're a good friend to Enoch," said Slocum, and limped away to the old stone dock.

This was the first of several reports from Slocum concerning the hermit of Mount Hope, his altered demeanor, his unaccountable moroseness and enigmatical metaphors, in which the currents, the tide, and Slocum's poor imitation of a voyage, seeming to have fixed in his mind a dark analogy, suggested some hidden tragedy of his life.

"All day long," said Slocum, "he taps on one of them typewriting-machines, and half the night he walks the shore, or gits into his skiff and rows or sails roundabout

to nowhere. And if he smiles, it's a smile that you don't take to—so different from before."

Soon Mr. Lee was admitted to these confidences.

"Father, did you know Mr. Lloyd was here? Captain Slocum, of the light-ship, says he came last week, and he's killing himself with work."

Mr. Lee smiled and shook his head. "Don't worry. Work like his puts life into a man; it never hurts any one at that age. So he's here again. Funny he should not have been over to tell me about it."

"About what?"

"Oh, I wrote to him in New York two months ago, asking him to write us another book as soon as possible. You see, now that *The Greatest Good* has succeeded so remarkably here, thanks to the furore in London, and now that his name is made, he must strike while the iron's hot, as I told him in my letter."

"But, father, I fear it's breaking him down. He's so changed, Captain Slocum says. He's not himself at all."

"H-um. Well, of course he will come to see us soon, and then we'll cheer him up a little. Eh, Maid Marion, you can do that, can't you?"

She flushed hotly, and, as the days went by, grew so preoccupied that the old man even neglected his other children — his happy spring gardening — in conferring with her and Slocum.

Again and again Marion asked herself if Enoch really believed that she hated him. Did he not understand that first moment of her awakening, when he had so madly held her in his arms? Did he not know that, though she had spoken of hate and sent him from her, he had made her his? Yes; he had stormed and won her. And yet, at first, she had desperately rebelled. She had not been able to believe, all in one moment, that love had come to her. But now she knew, yes, *knew* her heart, with all the clear, eternal certainty of which that

heart was capable. Until the last few days her very spirit had seemed to be lost in song—a song of ineffable, world-transforming joy and of praise to God, and of notes that seemed to harmonize with His universe. She had never guessed that, in the cause of Enoch's fiery burst of feeling, there had existed a world of emotion overlying his love. To the passage he had read her from the manuscript of a supposed friend she had given little thought. He had been driven to reading it by her coldness; he had impetuously gone to an extreme. All that she knew thereafter, and all she cared to know, was that he loved her and she loved him. Moreover, had he not asked her to forgive him for so wildly calling her into life? Forgive him? Often since she had smiled at that word "forgive." Yes, yes; she could readily forgive him for having made the world a heaven.

But why had he neither come nor written? And why, now that he was so near, did he keep away? Could it really be that he feared she would not receive him? Her deductions, drawn from Slocum's disclosures, pointed to some new condition of mind, some troubling influence of which she knew nothing. It was now that his question returned to her forcibly, that disturbing question regarding the effects of evil. This, however, she would not dwell upon nor consider a moment. Instead, she told herself he was working, and working for her, and that when his work was finished he would come.

But the days passed until June was at hand—only a week away—and still they had not seen him.

Several times in her rambles Marion found herself half unconsciously skirting the cove, but only once did she yield to her heart's instinct.

It was late on a warm afternoon, and the song within her was rising and swelling as though soon it would burst into voice. The song of her love was greeting summer. And of summer he was the soul. Through the meadows

she went singing, and down to the shore, then along by the water, singing and treading so lightly that seemingly she herself belonged amid the equerries of air. Towards her hatless hair the sunlight and the warm wind appeared, as it were, to be homing, as if they had sped from the west for this alone. And the wind flurried the sunlight there into threads of wavering flame. Her cheeks were as pink as wild-rose petals, and her eyes, now intent on the Mount Hope shore, were limpid as crystal springs. Once again she wore her favorite stuff and color—a linen of russet brown.

From the shore she struck into the woods to avoid discovery. Here the new grass and the new leafage of the undergrowth and the maidenly ferns, just beginning to uncurl, touched her ankles softly as she passed, while to her step the springy moss-beds, edging a tiny stream she followed, lent the motion of a dryad.

On through the lengthening shadows the brook led her, and now sang the only song. She was pleased to let it sing for her; the spirit of its melody was the spirit of hers. The shadows were growing longer, and the sunshine fell aslant in the woods. But even in the shadows she found delight. Here and there in the heart of them a buttercup lifted its head, so golden, so pure, so impalpable-looking as to suggest that perhaps a ray of the sun, lost and left behind by its fellows, had miraculously taken root and flowered.

Over her head the roof of leaves, frescoed with green-gold traceries, rose in a thousand little distances, height on height—surely a divine fret-work. Thence, now and again, floated down the notes of a bird singing to the blue. The spirit of his song was the spirit of the brook's and the spirit of her own.

As she walked she looked up many times through the interstices, and could see the dome that surmounted the fret-work. Once or twice a pair of wings crossed

an opening—inconceivably high. Thus was her heart soaring.

From below came the murmur of the water as it wooed the shore. Thus was the heaven-drawn tide of her love invincibly rising to meet him.

On and on she went, mysteriously enchanted by the inexpressible liberty of her bondage.

Not until she reached the edge of the mystic grove in which his cabin stood did Marion pause to consider.

If only she could see him, could look at him for one moment, she would rest content. Even a single glimpse might suffice for the time being.

Hesitant, she skirted the opening behind his hermitage, which stood in the centre, facing the cove. About the walls of the little cottage the vines ran riot with new life. While she stood there she spied a wee thing awhir, darting in and out amid the cabin's leafy mantle. The speck was a humming-bird, busy with building. Presently a tiny swallow flew to the roof from the woods behind her, and, fluttering thereover with a twig in its bill, suddenly vanished in the chimney.

On tiptoe Marion crossed the opening and drew near to a side window. Taking courage, she peeped in at the interior of his workshop. Through the opposite window on the western side the sunshine flooded in at a gentle slope straight across a long table in the middle of the room. He was sitting at the table, pen in hand. Its top was covered with loose sheets of manuscript thrown about, apparently at random. At the moment of her coming he seemed to be idle for want of words. She saw his profile dark against the sunlight. His eyes were gazing vacantly through the doorway, out across the bay. Once he passed a hand across his brow and brushed back his hair with the old motion of a struggle against abstraction. The gesture bespoke the sweeping aside of mental vapors. She knew it well. Once he bent to the

blank page before him, tensely frowning, as if with a determination to force an expression of his thoughts.

But either the thoughts themselves were shapeless or the power of expression, hitherto so facile, had for the moment utterly deserted him.

He dropped his pen and rose with a look of surrender. Standing with his back to her, he gazed full into the sunlight, the finger-tips of his hand moving restlessly over the surface of the blank paper.

At last he turned away and crossed slowly to a small table near the stairs, his head and shoulders stooping with a hang-dog look, utterly unlike the bold, free carriage that she loved. On the small table stood a typewriting-machine and a pile of manuscript, neat and white, beside it.

He fell to work, clicking mechanically; and now his expression strangely disturbed her mind. Her dismay defined it in one word — *lifeless*. Though his fingers jigged on the keys and his head was bent to the task, sheet following sheet in regular succession, he seemed to be, like the thing he tapped, a mere machine. The lines of his face relaxed; he was very pale. A lock of hair had slipped down over his forehead. His lips were moving as he wrote. His shoulders sloped, with the slope of drudgery. Only his fingers appeared to be animate. He looked a slave. Perhaps her love gave her eyes to read beneath the surface; perhaps any other watcher would have failed to note the details of the change. And yet it was her love that laughed at her bewilderment. She told herself that the case was plain. In the moments when his book refused to materialize and the original work hung fire, he was typewriting the part already roughly penned, in order to facilitate a reading by her father. Of course, a task like this was purely mechanical. No doubt he loathed that little machine.

She started, and frowned in perplexity. There was

not a sheet near him to be copied. He was doing original work. The page went in pure white and came out covered with even lines of composition, evidently dictated directly by his brain. He was not consulting a rough draft.

With apparent irrelevancy his question concerning evil once more flashed back to her mind: "Can a man do wrong for a time and yet remain unscathed? After it's over is he just as high, do you think, just as strong?"

At the moment of her recalling this question the typewriter stopped clicking, Lloyd raised his head, and, as though he had suddenly felt her presence, shot a glance at the window. Quicker yet she withdrew and swiftly retreated to the woods.

Without pausing, she hastened homeward; but there came no sound of a step in pursuit. He had evidently not seen her. The only sound, other than the songs of birds and the ripple of the brook and the stir of the overhead leaves, was the discord of a new impression, strangely out of place in the country. It beat mechanically on her ears—*Clickety-tap, click-tap, tap . . . tap . . .*

When Marion came upon her father in the garden she told the impractical nursery-man that unless he straightway forsook his husbandry he would certainly be late for dinner. Whereat, looking up from a bulb, just embedded, he shook his head and his eyes twinkled. "Now, my captain, for once you are wrong. Dinner will be a little late this evening. I've this very minute sent Timothy off with a note to Lloyd."

The color flooded to her face. "A note for Mr. Lloyd?"

"Yes. I have received a letter for him from the Millennium Club, telling him of his election. I have enclosed it in another from myself, inviting him to dinner there next Monday. Oh yes; he's to be admitted with

the usual ceremony." The little old gentleman looked down at the bulb with a trace of dejection. "I suppose I shall have to neglect the garden for a day or two and think up a speech for the great occasion. And he will have to prepare one, also."

Marion spoke as if to herself. "Then you're going to New York?"

"Yes; to-morrow."

"To-morrow?"

"Yes; but I've asked him surely to come and see us this evening."

Marion's eyes were luminous. "This evening," she kept repeating to herself. "This very evening."

"And I've asked him," continued Mr. Lee, bending affectionately over the bulb, "to bring the opening chapters of his book. You see, I'd like to take them with me and read them on the train." He knelt and patted down the earth about his foster-child. "You may be sure this request and the news of his election will bring Mr. Enoch Lloyd, or I am ignorant of young ambition."

When Timothy returned, Mr. Lee was not so sure.

The sciatic servitor came painfully up the slope, muttering to himself and shaking his head. In one hand he held a flat parcel, in the other a note. His master, who was leaving the garden with Marion, eyed the servant's face. It was drawn with a trouble other than that from the chronic annoyance in his bones.

"Mr. Lloyd, sir, asked me to give you these, and say he was very sorry."

Marion turned away with a weight on her heart, and said nothing.

The two old men watched her receding figure. For the moment there was, perhaps, a tacit sympathy between them—a sympathy for her that made them equals while they looked.

"Mr. Lloyd could hardly write," said Timothy, "for want of rest. He even fell asleep, sir, before I left him."

Mr. Lee paused in the library. Even experience, thought the gentle philosopher, is not infallible where youth is the problem to be solved. He read the note in the lamp-light. When he had done so his expression changed. The beam returned. He hurried up-stairs to Marion's bedroom.

Having thrown off the russet linen, she stood arranging her hair for dinner before a new mirror which, in place of the misty antique, at last surmounted her dressing-table.

He caught sight of her face in the glass. Her eyes were moist with tears. "It's all right, Marion," said he, cheerfully; "it's all right. Read this."

Only half turning, so that her long hair screened the anxiety of her face, she read the missive:

"My dear Mr. Lee,—How can I ever hope to thank you for all your kindness to me? It is, indeed, far greater than I deserve. My election to the Millennium Club is an honor which I appreciate more than I can possibly express. I shall, of course, be at the dinner in New York on Monday evening. But will you forgive me if I do not come to see you to-night? Also for my seeming negligence in not having called sooner? I have been working very hard ever since I have been here, and to-night I am desperately in need of sleep. In fact, I can hardly write this note coherently, my eyes are so heavy and my brain so unusually fatigued.

"Ever gratefully yours,

"Enoch Lloyd.

"P. S.—I send you all the chapters that are finished. My warmest thanks to you for offering to read them so soon. I will come over in a day or two to hear your verdict.

"E. L."

Marion's eyes brightened through her tears. When

she turned to her father they were half troubled, half smiling. "You see, he is worn out."

Mr. Lee nodded approvingly. "Yes, dear, of course he is. Genius always wears itself out, or it is not genius."

Marion reread the letter, which, it will be observed, she had not returned. In spite of the pride she was taking in repeating to herself her father's confident declaration of Enoch's genius, she felt distressed. Genius seemed to deprive people of their health. "How does it happen that he is not coming till to-morrow or the next day?" she asked, at length. "Didn't you tell him you were going away?"

Mr. Lee looked shamefaced. "Do you know, I believe I forgot!"

"Oh, father; how like you!"

The gentle philosopher apologized by quoting a parody of his own invention. "Well, well, my dear, you must remember that: "In the spring an old man's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of bulbs."

Marion went close to him and took his hand. "Father, I shall never leave you."

"No rash promises, Maid Marion. Remember, a *young* man's fancy is not for bulbs."

As he started to drive away in the morning, she stood on the steps in the sunlight waving him good-bye. "Write to me soon."

His face brightened with gratified devotion. At least she wanted to hear from him.

"Write very soon," she added, darting a glance of bashful pride and affection at a paper parcel under his arm, "and tell me your opinion of it."

II

The Heart of Marion

ALL day the sky had been lowering with heavy clouds. In from the sea they rolled in shapeless masses, edged with foamlike white—the surf of the sky. To the southeast a storm was brewing. Above the distant shore in that direction a long, black bank hung dense, and the smell of salt came in on a rising wind. Over the pastures the swallows flew low. At the gates the cattle had gathered, waiting to be housed. No rain, however, had yet fallen. Overhead the wind's cargo was still intact. The bay was an enormous vat of molten lead. But the seethe of its contents looked cold. Not a sail touched it with a spot of whiteness.

Marion had sat at her window through three everlasting hours of the afternoon. This was the second day after her father's departure. In the morning she had received the following letter, written at his office:

"DEAR MAID MARION,—I read his manuscript twice over in the train, but I am still at a loss for words with which to express my opinion of it. One thing, however, is certain—sorry though I am to say so and to tell *you*—this work is in no way on a level with *The Greatest Good*. Imagine my disappointment when, as I read page after page, I came to this conclusion. But I was not only disappointed, I was grieved. The cause of this feeling is not apparent. It is not to be found on the surface of his new book. The ideals he expresses are still lofty, the style is facile, the language glows. And his view of life is more definite than before. His thoughts have cohered; his intellect is rendering more

practicable the conceptions of his fancy. Nevertheless—now do not think me harsh, dear child—the work is a failure.

"I can hardly bear to write you this. I can see your face, as you read, lose so much of that happiness which, though it means *my* passing, nevertheless cheers my heart. Indeed, I would have begged the question, but that I feel it may be in your power to help this young man, who is, I am still confident, right at heart. Yes, perhaps God has given it to us to bring one of His most prominent workmen back to those earlier heights. I say advisedly, right at heart, for though I do maintain he is so, the heart of this work is wrong. It does not ring true. Somehow the stamp of sincerity is not upon it. Impossible as such a thing may seem concerning the genius of Enoch Lloyd, it appears now to be marred by charlatanry. And yet the false note is very subtle. I am convinced that even he himself is not aware of its presence, nor of the discord it creates. The effect suggests that he has unconsciously lost that spontaneity of life and truth and beauty which spoke so eloquently in his first effort. It is as though some influence or some untoward event had warped his view. I hate even to suggest it of our young friend, but were these chapters written by a stranger, I should say, 'Here is an author who does not practice what he preaches.'

"Nevertheless, dearest Marion, I repeat, there is no *conscious* hypocrisy in what he has written. And this distinction is not so fine as some might think—especially to one who has been, as I have, fairly immersed in literature. Yes, he is unaware of the thing that has gone out of him. Yet perhaps he could account for this artificiality if a misgiving were suddenly brought home to him. Possibly he has been reading the wrong sort of book. It seems as though a kind of decadent literature, not unlike the modern Italian, or, more still, the French, had left its impress on his mind. His fire has faded into rhetoric, his ideals are now but epigrams, his philosophy is undertoned with bitterness; and the truth is, Marion, I must refuse, both for his sake and that of my own standards, to publish this book. But I shall not tell him so until after the dinner on Monday night. It would be cruel to spoil his pleasure. He has

been elected to the Millennium on the strength of his first book. The second is another matter. And yet I should be the first to regret his admission, and, of course, far more your feeling for him — no, no, don't protest, dear child; I know that look; it was once your mother's — were I not confident that this is but a lapse, and that the *life* in him — the free, big love of life and truth and beauty — will yet rise above the atrophy we call decadence, which is but a sort of spiritual dying. A man with large life in his body can often stay the hand of actual death; so, too, a man with life in his soul can maintain that spark against every wind of destiny; yes, against even the whirlwind of his own sowing.

"It is for us, my dear, to help Enoch Lloyd in this maintenance.

"And now, Maid Marion, good-bye to you. Somehow, this word good-bye is hard to write. It means so much more than it used to mean. It recalls the finality of another farewell — your mother's, and foreshadows two more that I suppose must soon be said — my farewell to you when you choose your husband, and again a last good-bye when I go to meet her in the near Beyond.

"Oh, forgive me, daughter mine; what am I writing? Away with the shadows of age from the sunshine of your youth. Yes, and I, too, have a share of that sunshine, a remoter but mellower portion. For, though the shadows lengthen in life's long afternoon, there's always the afterglow of memory. So don't be over-scrupulously filial, my dear; don't exaggerate your duty. Yesterday you said, 'Father, I shall never leave you.' Now, Maid Marion, listen to me, though my answer is perhaps hopelessly heterodox to the tenets of wordly wisdom.

"When your cavalier comes, and you know that his heart is right, go to him quickly. Yes, I shall even insist. And you may go with a free mind, remembering this afterglow that always comforts a certain rambling old philosopher, bookman, gardener, and what-not, who, when all these pleasant little pursuits are cast aside, will still retain as one of his dearest privileges this of being

"Forever and aye, your devoted

"FATHER."

Marion's dinner was a lonely repast. The more so because the king and the enchanted Excalibur on the wall-paper monopolized her thoughts. "From this spirit of the water," Enoch had said, "the man received a power with which to shape his future."

After dinner Marion returned to the window and sat with her face close to the pane, looking longingly into the night. Once she reread the letter, and ended by crumpling it in her hand.

The lights of the house fell across the orchard. It suggested a lair of nightmare shapes. The shadows of the gale-blown branches moved in the dog-grass as though alive. Beyond the orchard, save for isolated lights on the opposite shore, the night was impenetrable with pitchy blackness. To the northeast the reflection of a city's lights flared against the sky. It revealed an oblong, overhanging cloud. The bay was ink.

It was eight o'clock when Marion rose. She saw a form moving in the orchard which was not a shadow. Instantly the night was without effect. It might have been beautiful as any in June, to judge by her changed expression. Yet only in her eyes the stars shone; only in her heart that night was beneficent.

Without even an instinct of restraint—so true was her love, so free, so natural—she hastened down to admit him. Swinging open the heavy front door, she stood there aglow before him. She could feel the hot wave of her color throbbing from her heart and beating in her throat and temples. Her eyes, timid stars, sought, yet evaded his own. She swayed slightly; her lips parted; she breathed deep. "Father and I have expected you for a long time." Two strong, white hands went out to him; two luminous eyes, dew-gray, sea-deep, looked into his own.

His brain reeled. Was this the marble statue he had trained himself to meet with cold formality—this beau-

tiful, beseeching woman, whose eyes searched and laid bare his spirit, and yet bestowed on it the gracious balm of tenderness? Involuntarily his arms went out to her, as a drowning man's to a stronger swimmer; then his brain cleared and the wretchedness of his double life, his present service of the two elemental masters, seemed to sear his love. He stood rigid before her, his hands clinched, scarring his palms. "Marion — Miss Lee—!"

At the sound of his metallic, formal tone, the color, the glow, the tremulous yielding which like a wave-beat atmosphere had at first shone palpitant in Marion lulled into breathless silence. Always when together each of these two had seemed to the other as though central in a fire circle, whose flame was engendered by an inner spark. But now to each the cold hand of a psychical death seemed to be pressing upon them; the pulsating atmosphere had grown bleak and still.

"Miss Lee—Marion—I am not worthy even to touch your hand." He drew back. "I have done wrong. I never realized how much until this moment when you—" He broke off abruptly and smiled. It was like a blade on her heart, that smile of her Siegfried, the cleaver of flame. Where now was the life triumphant, the godlike love? He looked like an image of despair. "You will always be the marble goddess to me now," he told her, in a voice itself suggesting marble. "I shall keep you shrined in my soul. Beautiful, great-hearted Marion, you will not deny me that?" For the first time his voice broke. He had almost succumbed to the spell of her power. It was as if a tempest rushed from his heart catching up words, whirling forth love; but he locked his lips against it. The falter seemed to have almost shamed him into silence.

Marion's eyes grew grave with anxious bewilderment. Could he not see that she loved him? "Oh, Enoch," she

began, "Enoch—" But even then, when for the first time she called him Enoch, he maintained his mask.

"Is your father at home?"

She stepped back. The blade of his smile was stabbing her. Nevertheless, she would not desert him. "No, he has gone to New York, but"—her voice trembled—"*I* am here."

The love in her heart was not only tender, it seemed to be indomitably strong. Or, rather, this very tenderness was strength, and her father's letter had increased it. She recalled these words: "A man with large life in his body can often stay the hand of actual death; so, too, a man with life in his soul can maintain that spark against every wind of destiny; yes, against even the whirlwind of his own sowing." She had determined to use all her power, all her love, to fan alive the fire in Enoch. Why it seemed likely to die she did not know, but this was not the time to wonder. She must give him her woman's best aid; she would never fail him. While he stood there, and the wind blew in at the doorway, and he hung silent in the heart of it, she took this firm resolve: never again would she fail him. What he had done, how he had lived, wherein lay the shadow of his turning, she did not consider now. He was hers, hers, *hers*, and she would make herself worthy of him by making him worthy of himself. Once given, her heart was not a heart that could be withdrawn. Once won, it was won forever. And it knew his own, else there had been no possibility of love. She knew his own deep heart, and what his lips said and what his face said could never drown the voice of the life and the truth and the love within it. Whatever he had *done* could not have changed his *being*. And, best of all, he was at last here with her. Ah! she would never let him go again without protecting him from this nameless something that attacked his soul. "You will be my muse, encouraging and uplifting me to higher en-

deavor always. You can do that, your eyes can, your voice can, your mind and spirit can—then do!"

Marion smiled. His eyes, ever interpretable through the mask, were voicing again the plea of his letter. They seemed, as he stood there with the night behind him, to be crying it to her out of the storm.

"Come in and tell me," she said, simply; "tell me what is wrong."

He hesitated, with a foot on the threshold and lowered glance. Somehow, at the moment of her invitation he could not meet her eyes. It came to him then that one thing only would restore to him the right to do so. But no; she would surely again turn away from him, and this time forever. Her new manner, now so disturbing and yet a solace, so lovely and yet a torture, surely could not last. It could never stand the test he was considering. Well, what matter? He would at least have put the thing in words. He would at least have shaped the formless void, the abysmal chaos, into which his soul was sinking. As she waited, with the cheerfully lighted interior behind her, a sudden desire sprang up within him to define his present condition. To himself he was incapable of doing so; only to her could it be done. He wanted to express himself, to utter in so many words his two selves—the selves that were now becoming so inextricably mingled. In a moment this overpowering desire had put all thoughts of the consequence to flight.

Still dumb, he crossed the threshold and followed Marion to the library.

Once there, she turned to him with a peculiar blending of timidity and force. "Tell me, Enoch; oh, tell me —everything." She sank to a sofa near the bookshelves, against whose lines of antiquated tomes she formed a striking contrast. All those systems of ethics and religion, standing there row on row behind her; all that cemetery of dead philosophies could not have in-

fluenced him one-thousandth part as strongly as did the vivid, breathing, living Marion in the foreground. Against a line of gloomy bindings her hair, with its remarkable effect of lucency, was spreading abroad, together with her eyes, a light that went infinitely deeper in his depths than the light of those once prescient intellects now dead and leather-embalmed behind her could ever have penetrated.

From over the mantel-shelf the eyes of the ancestral Lee followed the guest of his youngest descendant. It seemed impossible to evade their scrutiny. But the eyes of her father's portrait on the opposite wall were quaintly benevolent.

Now and again Enoch stood motionless before her, shaping the chaos, but oftener he paced the room with an air of fitful abstraction, much the same, no doubt, as when he had paced to and fro that night in the fog on the deck of Slocum's light-ship. Now that it had come to the crucial point, the requisite strength was wanting. Something had sapped it in the past winter, and little save the habit of concealment was really strong.

"I am sorry I missed your father," he told her, with obvious procrastination. "I had hoped that by to-night he might have read the opening chapters."

"He has," she replied, with a quick but hesitant impulse; then, forming a resolve founded on the very corner-stone of her character, she determined to confront him with the charge against a something that suggested a lower self. In this new, mightily developing love of hers there was a quality even profounder than the tenderness, an element that could bear to wound him for his own good.

Taking her father's crumpled letter from her breast, she read the criticism to Enoch, omitting only the references to herself.

When she had finished his face was ashen. A low

half cry like a moan escaped him; his gaze wandered unseeingly about the room; his brows were drawn down in a frown of vital bewilderment; his shoulders painfully stooped. Then suddenly he stood erect, as if horror-struck, and his look was the look of one who is brought by a swift shock face to face with the results of the wrong. "Yes, yes," he said, hoarsely, "it is true. It is terrible. I don't know the difference"—he laughed aloud, and Marion shuddered—"I don't know the difference between good and evil!" He sank to the chair at the writing-table and fell to repeating over and over Mr. Lee's most telling phrases. "The heart of this work is wrong." ". . . marred by charlatanry." "Discord!" "An author who does not practice what he preaches." ". . . the atrophy we call decadence . . . a sort of spiritual dying."

Enoch was at bay. He had been weighed in the balance and found wanting. What damning charges they were! Oh, God, how true! "Yes," he told her, "I have gone so far that I can't distinguish between them. I'm no longer Jekyll and Hyde," he laughed, hoarsely. "I am only Hyde."

For an instant Marion recoiled. The wish was in her mind to leave the room, but the strength was in her heart to stay there. And the intuition that quickened that strength said this: Had pride not shut my spirit against him at the very first; had I never written that letter; yes, had I been a mere friend when I knew so well that he needed one, Enoch might never have done wrong! So thinking, she rose slowly, the tears welling in her eyes. Crossing to him she sank to one knee beside his chair and took his hand and looked up to compel an answering gaze. It was as though Marion were the wrong-doer, Enoch the one wronged. "Tell me," she implored him, passionately—"tell me what has happened."

He withdrew his hand. A devil hung at his ear and prompted a travesty. "Do you know Miss Dolly Cohen?" he asked, lightly. "No, I suppose not. Well, she's the notorious author of *The Flame of Folly*, *The Altar of Love*, and other pernicious trash. Now, the funny part of it is, that I—*I*—am Dolly Cohen!"

Marion, in a turmoil of anxiety, caught back his hand. "Enoch, Enoch, what is wrong with you?" Her eyes darkened in fear. "Do you need sleep? You're not yourself—"

"No," he nodded, "you are right. I'm not myself. I'm Dolly Cohen."

She rose, shivering with apprehension. His voice was so tragically ludicrous! It jangled on her nerves. Who was this woman he talked about? What was this horrible phantasmagoria that coupled the name so dear to her with a name that sounded base? She stood back, looking down at him in alarm.

But the vague, unthinkable question in her eyes only tickled the devil at his ear. "No, no, I'm not crazy. I'm not in need of sleep. I slept yesterday twenty hours; but then it's true I'd had no sleep for a week before. Yes, Miss Lee, I'm Dolly Cohen. She begs to introduce herself. She's the lower half of Enoch Lloyd." He paused. Marion had retreated farther from him. And yet her eyes, though no longer questioning his mental balance, were luminous with a compassion that at any moment other than this of his new discovery—the discovery of his inability now to discriminate between good and bad—would surely have gained his soul. Oh, why did the devil insist on a farcical confession? It was being made somewhat after the travestical manner of the actual Dolly Cohen, with a positively sardonic perversity. Perhaps the spirit of Dolly herself was the devil at his ear! Hyde was revelling in his triumph.

"The point is," pursued Enoch, in a casual way, "I've

written so much of the bad kind that I cannot write the good. Funny, isn't it? I thought I could keep them both going, but it seems I can't. So I shall have to stick to the trash. That, at all events, I'm bound to do. There's no hope. It's a queer case. I'm tied down. I'm the slave of a bad angel. You see, the most unaccountable thing happened. After I'd written as Dolly Cohen—yes, I chose the name myself; don't ask me why—after I'd made that name famous among a certain low class, an actual woman up and assumes it. She parades as the author, knowing well enough that I do not dare to expose her, and so she has become the lower part of me incarnate. And I can't kill her, because that would be murder, and I can't betray her, because that would be the suicide of Enoch Lloyd. Did you ever hear such an amazing story? It's good enough for a book—so entertaining, so bizarre."

He rose, wild-eyed but laughing.

Marion vaguely understood. "When did you first write—*down?*" she asked, with clear, adequate thoughtfulness, her manner like that of a beautiful sister of mercy, strong and resourceful. She was, indeed, a nurse that evening, watchful, tender, sympathetic—the nurse of her lover's soul.

Enoch hesitated before replying to her question. The inherent chivalry in him, still alive, never-killable, forbade him to ascribe the beginning of his degradation to the time of her frigid note. Even the devil at his ear could not persuade him to blame her.

With swift perception Marion understood his hesitancy. She saw that she was at least in a measure responsible, and that he, though distraught with bitterness, was far too chivalrous to condemn her.

"Soon after my failure with *The Greatest Good*," he told her, dully, "disappointment and a peculiar stroke of fate drove me to it; also the suggestions of Matthew Steele."

"Matthew Steele!"

"Yes; he is Miss Cohen's publisher. Now you know the sort of books they were. I read a chapter to you in New York. It's true that novel was never published, but the rest were not much better."

Marion shuddered. The name of Steele and the realization that the chapter Enoch had read to her that night in New York was of his own writing, showed her the depth of his fall. She saw it all in a flash. Again she saw him torn two ways in the cabin when she had stood there at the window and watched at a struggle whose motives had not at the time been understood. He had been trying to write the good and the bad, but the bad had conquered. *Click-tap, click-tap*, it had steadily evolved with mechanical precision. All because some unknown woman, an adventuress, had contrived by daring imposture to gain control of him, mind and spirit. An unknown woman! The thought of that other so strangely close to him, so blent with his fate, so intimate with his lower self, almost shook her determination. The sister of mercy was very human. The personal element could not be set aside.

"Do you know this—this—Dolly Cohen?"

Lloyd smiled with infinite bitterness. "Know her? Yes, I do. The truth is—oh, there's no denying it—I am utterly in her power." His voice fell lower, but not inaudible, as he added to himself, "Yet perhaps, if it came to the crucial point, she would weaken for my sake."

Marion paled. Her heart seemed to have stopped beating. She was ice-cold. Who but an angel incapable of human love could have forgotten Self at such a moment? She could have heard of that other woman's enmity and still the strong hand of her aid would have gone out to him; but now that he spoke of the woman's weakness for him, a weakness that suggested she would not think what, her hand was instinctively withdrawn.

"Well," said Enoch—"*well?*" He was beside himself with a longing to have her question him—to have her set loose the torrent his remorse had dammed. But she only stood there rigid and voiceless, condemning him with her eyes.

Once more that other woman had stepped in between him and a possible redemption. But Enoch imagined that Marion was thus forbiddingly silent only because of the actual wrong. He did not know that the devil had leaped from him to her and was whispering in her ear a terrible suspicion.

He laughed bitterly. "This is what I expected and what I deserve. I have nothing more to say. Only one thing I would remind you, and that is hardly necessary. What I have said is for you alone."

Before she could summon the courage and self-abnegation to recall him, he had left her. "Yes," he repeated to himself, "I deserve it."

The rain was now falling in sheets. The wind had suddenly let go by the board its enormous cargo in the heavens. The water beat in fury against the rocks.

Instinctively Enoch avoided the storm-struck shore. He hastened homeward by the country road, sheltered from time to time by arching trees. Not until he had come nearly to the place at which he must enter the woods did he pause in that fateful return, and then there was a definite reason.

Under an oak-tree at the road-side stood a dilapidated station carryall, wheels in the mud, horse jaded, rain-curtains flapping in the wind. When Enoch had passed the conveyance he looked back. The carriage-lamp, wavering and rain-spattered, revealed a hackman asleep within. Enoch frowned. The vehicle meant that some one had come to see him. His was the only house in the vicinity. Who could it be? Cuthbert Morton? Had Cutty come on from New York to trouble yet further his

weary brain? Yes; it might well be Cutty. Who else kept a hand on his future? Who else? He repeated the question with sharp apprehension, and stumbled forward hurriedly through the underbrush.

When he flung open the door he paused on the threshold without surprise, his gaze resting vaguely on his visitor. Presently he nodded slowly, not in greeting, but as though replying to his last suspicion: "Yes; it could be none but you."

She rose from the chair at his writing-table and smiled him a welcome. "The summer has come," she said, sweetly, "and so have I. What lovely weather!" She flicked off the rain-drops, then, throwing aside a sombre storm-coat, revealed a suit of black cloth, severely simple. "I hope you're not going abroad," she said. "I was afraid you might have started already; that's why I came. Gol O'Brien is going to ask you."

Enoch started, with a flash of eagerness that caused her to smile in comprehension.

"Oh, I see it's just as well I came. How annoying it would have been to miss you. I hope nothing's wrong. Of course, you've finished the book—*my* novel. But come in, won't you? I dislike the wind."

Enoch entered, gloomily, and closed the door.

"Why didn't you look amazed," she demanded, with pretty petulance, "when you found me here in possession? I had thought it would be a great surprise."

Lloyd shook his head. "No; I knew you would grow uneasy."

"I uneasy? Why so? You gave me your word. Can you guess why I came? It was simply because I couldn't help it. Think of that! Little Céleste, the pink of propriety, has lost her head." She seated herself on the edge of the writing-table while Lloyd, having sunk to the chair beside it, sat there dumb, in a kind of stupor, looking everywhere but at her. "Yes; that's

why I came. But what's the matter? You look as though you had sold your soul to the devil, and as though I, on behalf of his majesty, were here to claim it."

Enoch nodded in silence.

"Ho!" she laughed, "this is a compliment. Well, do you know, I'd rather play the devil to *you* than an angel to any other." She slipped down and knelt beside him and took his hand. Her position was exactly the same as that of Marion not an hour before. But Enoch did not, as then, withdraw his fingers. He was not unworthy of the present touch. It seemed good to be lulled by an influence that was not above him, not so unattainably high. Strange to say, this woman's presence no longer made him ill at ease. He was experiencing a blind solace in having her so close to him to soften the seclusion, while all about them the tempest brawled and the rain, as though threatening to enter and drown them, beat in fury against the panes. Without her his loneliness would have been desperate. Isolated here with his thoughts, he might almost have gone mad. Moreover, there was no longer a struggle within him. What was there, save to surrender to the wrong? Even the power to write as he had once written had deserted him. Stephen Lee's letter had shown him that. He was no longer capable of elevating any one; the shadow of his turning lay full upon him; the weight of his incubus, first a light-enough burden assumed with ease, had grown with appalling rapidity heavier and heavier till now it inevitably dragged him down. And the woman whose destiny had become so strangely interwoven with his own was gently healing the inner sore. With a gracious little palm she brushed back the hair from his forehead; with a comforting smile she bade him pluck up new heart. The case was not so dreadful. What if he had temporarily lost the hang of his first manner? When this

book of hers was out of the way he would regain the old spontaneity and fire. He would have free rein. Of course, he had not been able to do two things at once. He ought not to have even tried. Poor boy, how haggard the attempt had left him, how drawn and pale! Well, well; a night or two of good, sound sleep would restore his balance. The tears were in her eyes as she thought of her cruelty in having made him work so hard. Genuine concern was in her voice and eyes. "Oh, you don't know me," she said, at last; "I haven't shown you my true nature, and yet only *you* awaken it. You would not believe me if I told you of the happiness and pain that come to me when I think of you. I have pictured you here so often—free, careless, godlike, loving the sky, the bay, the shore. Do you know, I was that way once myself, but only in early childhood. Of a Sunday afternoon we used to cross the Seine, father, mother, and I, and, dressed in our best, we would hie ourselves out in the Bois. At first I loved only the flowers and the green things and the wide expanse of the blue above. Yes, yes; I loved it all passionately—of a Sunday afternoon. But as I grew older the people of the Bois, as well as the natural beauty, caught my eye. I can remember how my envy of those fashionable children grew. One seldom is jealous of the flowers, no matter how finely they're arrayed, but a little girl in a shoddy smock soon covets the finery of richer little girls with silks and ribbons and flowery hats. Yes; the poor little girl envies the rich one, from the fair bare legs to the toy balloon that floats so airily above her. You see how it was that in the garden of my heart, beside those flowers of the beautiful Bois, there grew up tares. Hélas, those tares have killed the flowers."

She paused with a quick half-sob, then smiled up to him bravely through gathering tears. (Was there ever such a pretty piece of comedy, she thought—if she could

really call it acting?) "A heart full of weeds," she murmured, wistfully; "and you are its only gardener."

Lloyd looked down at her with a sad smile. The poetry of her temperament had touched him. The blood of the old French poet was in her still. Enoch could feel its subtle influence. Almost, he could have loved this wonderful little spirit. What did the darkness of her eyes conceal? And the shadows that always seemed to veil her face, as though spread downward by the midnight of her hair, what light of a simple, happy childhood did these obscure? Could it be that he had really awakened her soul? Ah! then perhaps his double existence of the past year had not been an utter failure. It acted like a gratifying palliative, this thought that perhaps the latent good in him had touched a kindred chord in her. Perhaps, after all, he could do some good in the life that she had opened up before him. He could instil better sentiment into the novels of Dolly Cohen. Gradually he would raise their level. No other way remained. It was now not so much a question of exposure as of this incapacity again to write nobly—this unaccountable *going out* of the inner spark. Whatever he wrote in imitation of *The Greatest Good* would not ring true. How much better to be sincere and grope more gradually upward.

Meanwhile Dolly murmured an accompaniment to these indulgent ramblings of his tired brain. Be it said, in justice to him, it was mostly his fatigue that rendered possible her ascendency that evening. The fatigue, however, was itself due to his service of the two masters.

Dolly knelt long at his side, and when finally she rose it was only to seat herself on the chair-arm. Could it be that she had forgotten the demands of her mission? Could she have lost sight of the main issue? She had come for the book, desperately fearful lest he should fail

her, yet here she sat, apparently lured from her object by a new hope and an old longing.

What if the rain beat down and the wind roared and the last train left without her? What matter if the carriage stood waiting out there in the dark till doomsday. The present was the thing. Past, future, and eternity were beside the question. Expose him? No, not to save her soul. No, she would not expose him, even though he refused her the book, if only she could win him to her.

Thus they sat, comfortable in the heart of the storm. And, seemingly, all was so wrong with the world of one of them that even God was not in His heaven. Seemingly, yes; in reality, never. The Keeper of Life was watching. One of those combats which ever and anon in the individual experience seem to foreshadow the ultimate conflict was even now upon them.

The heart of Marion was militant. Recovering the fair, free scope of its courage, it had bidden her follow him into the night.

Throwing a long, hooded cloak about her, she had started by the shore for his home.

While the storm raged around the cabin, and Lloyd, sick at heart, tried to derive peace from the partner of his loneliness, Marion was braving its fury. She even felt inspired by its force. Though the rain cut her face, and the wind battled against her, and the water, dashing high above the rocks, wet her to the skin, she drew breath from the stress and strength of nature.

The greatness of her mission and her love had rendered futile the voice at her ear. Now that it found her deaf, it raised the clamor of convention. Truly, a puny, pusillanimous outcry against the liberty of the right. To this she was deafer still.

Without hesitation she crossed at once to his dwelling,

but with her hand upraised to knock at the door she paused in surprise. A woman's voice, low and musical, had reached her ears; then Enoch's, answering the murmur.

Marion, standing there drenched and wind-struck, shivered from head to foot. But it was not the rain and the gale that caused her chill. The murmur of the unknown woman was deep with passion.

Marion's brain swam. Her heart was constricted as by an actual pain. Fate itself was trying her bravery. Who could have come to him at such an hour? She went around through the dark and glanced in at the window. Was it over-feminine; was it at all unworthy of her lofty spirit, that fainting gaze? Yes; if the attendance of a God-sent nurse in the room of an illness is to be called unworthy. She had come to succor him and she could not leave him; she would fight to recall him to herself and the higher way. Love and the right, evenly mingled, actuated her every motive. For still, even while he sat there with the woman so close to him, she knew his heart. Her faith in his inmost soul could never be shaken. That faith had become a part of her religion.

Swaying, she turned away. She had recognized the woman. There could be no mistake. Instincts at such a moment possess a divination quicker than reason ever can boast. She had at a glance known the woman of darkness.

Oh, she was living in a horrible allegory, . . . the final test of her heart had come. It demanded an act that perhaps no good woman under similar circumstances had done before. It demanded her presence there before him. She must struggle for the mastery in person. Virtue must visit evil.

Small wonder she came near to fainting before so unprecedented a conflict. She could not enter at once. The strength was not in her. Instead she walked to the

shore, back and forth through the tempest, drinking in its might.

The struggle revived her pride. It was the spirit of her old, hard pride that returned to her now and cried out against the everlasting humiliation. Ah! but she had cast him aside when he needed her. Again and again she had shut herself from him when all his future hung in the balance. Would any sacrifice be too great to atone for so cruel a desertion? It seemed to her that if she left him now, Heaven itself would blame her for his evil. His soul was in her keeping. . . . And then, . . . more than all, . . . how desperately she loved him!

While the elements raged, and the sky and the earth seemed to rock about her, she stood there at last motionless, gazing far beyond the seethe of the water, breathing a prayer.

Over the distant city, high in the flare of its lights, two great, black shapes were crossing slowly, from darkness into darkness—continents of cloud.

She watched them pass, and the spray of the waves and the tears of her heart blinded her eyes. But the storm within and the storm without were gradually beginning to subside.

Dashing away the spray and the tears, Marion turned and went to the cabin and knocked on the door.

In a moment it was opened by Enoch. He started back confounded. The woman at the table stood surveying the visitor with smiling inquiry. But soon the smile grew bitter in apprehension.

Marion entered and closed the door, then paused for an instant, silent.

Dolly instinctively shrank back. There was so much of light in this unexpected visitor. Perhaps her singular effect of lucency as the hood of her cloak fell back—a lucency caused not only by the fairness of her skin, the

flame of her hair, and the deeper fires of her eyes, but also by something more intangible—had suddenly disturbed the custodian of night. But Dolly, quickly regaining her composure, seated herself in Enoch's chair and watched, with what little nonchalance she could muster, this amazing turn in her life's play.

Marion was facing Enoch. "I have come," she faltered, "to ask your forgiveness. I have done you a great wrong." Her eyes hung on his look and were melting with humility.

He trembled visibly; he could say nothing. Speech and reason had all at once deserted him. He could not believe she was really there. And yet her voice—that lasting voice of the violoncello, ineffably sweet, eternally reverberant—was echoing in his soul. The light of her eyes kindled in his. He breathed heavily. Suddenly all the glory of heaven had been opened to him. A celestial light seemed to irradiate his being. It caught him for an instant and transfigured him. . . . Again they centred a circle of flame. . . . Life had surged to the flood in him, to meet her own.

A low tinkle from Dolly recalled him. His cheeks flushed with shame. "Marion," he whispered, "go—go—I will follow you."

She turned slowly, her eyes lingering in his, and left the room.

The door stood open between them.

"Enoch," said Dolly, petulantly, at a loss to understand the meaning of it all. He shot a look of hatred at her.

"See here," she flashed, rising nervously, "where are you going? I want the manuscript."

"It is not finished," he told her with calm impatience, "and never will be."

Her body seemed to vibrate with anger. "You gave me your word."

Lloyd smiled. "I said that if I didn't do as you asked, you could expose me, and so you can."

"Wait, wait!" she cried, now beside herself with impotent fury; then, returning instinctively to the vulgarity of her birthplace, "Tu bête," she cried after him, as he left her; "quel sot!"

He hastened away.

Dolly, catching up her storm-coat, but not even waiting to throw it on, went out in a panic after him. She, too, thought nothing of the tempest, and, besides, it was dying now. The wind had fallen; the rain was a mere drip-dropping from the trees.

Half-way between his house and Marion's, near a prominent rock, Dolly caught up with him on the shore.

Nature seemed to be favoring her aim. If only she could talk with him and gain time! For this, the moment was on her side. The clouds overhead were breaking. Low above the eastern shore the light of the late-rising moon was uncertainly revealed.

But when, as she stood there, it showed her his face, she knew that nature was not her friend. She could read her sentence in his eyes. For a moment he paused and looked over the bay, then at her as she stood with her back to it—a small, dark figure close to the water's edge.

She caught his arm. "Let me see your eyes," she said, plaintively; "let me look into them." When he did so she knew the end. How remarkable her insight must have been could she discern enough in that instant of scrutiny to surrender and let him go! Yet this she did. Against the woman who had come to him, against that young girl, she now knew that all her art was of no avail.

"I am beaten," she faltered, stepping back and trying to smile. "I am beaten, and she has won." Then the reckless fling of her all-vivacious little bravery returned to lend her an air. Since she must die, she would die

game; she would laugh pluckily at M'sieur Death and leave behind her a token of esteem.

"Well, good-bye," she said, brightly; "this is the passing of Dolly Cohen. She leaves you in her will two things: one, the delightful little story of a literary Jekyll and Hyde, which is still, if you please, in type and most certainly will appear in the July number; the other—ah! the other legacy is better. The memory of the exposure may grow dim some day, when the world is tired of laughing at you, but the memory of this will never do so. Look at me! Look at me—once more." She stood there vibrant beside the rock, a small, dark, never-forgettable figure in the moonlight, her shadow reaching towards him.

"There," she said, "that is what I leave you. I leave you the memory of me. I am your evil incorporate. Dramatic, isn't it?" She laughed bitterly; then, with a break in her voice, "Am I cruel? Ah! but I do not want you to forget me, and this is the only way. Often when you stand with your arm about her, your imagination will see me thus, laughing at you out of the night."

Again her laughter tinkled softly in the open, cold as the moon.

But when he had left her he heard a sound like a stifled sob, growing fainter and fainter amid the dropping of rain from the shore-side branches in the direction of her carriage.

Hastening after Marion, Enoch overtook her in the orchard. Together they walked to the house. "Marion, oh, great-hearted Marion, my guardian spirit! And yet —and yet—I can never say again to you what I said before. She is determined to expose me, and a man debased by such a stigma would not be worthy of your heart."

On the steps of the veranda Marion turned full in the

light and smiled down to him. "She will not expose you. She will be too late. I've thought it out. There's but one way. Whom have you wronged? Whom have you deceived? You have deceived the world. To the world you should make your confession."

He blanched visibly.

"Yes, I know it will be hard," she said, softly; "but the hardest things at a time like this are best." Her figure seemed suffusive of radiance. "On Monday you dine at—"

"Stop," he interrupted, half between fervor and bitterness. "I know what you mean. I had thought of that." He averted his face and gazed across the water.

When he turned back Marion had left him; the door was closed.

It would now be well for him to be alone.

III

The Triumph of Life

THE dinner of admission given by the Millennium Club to Enoch Lloyd was one of the best attended in the history of that famous association. The dining-room—largest of all the club's apartments—was almost filled to its full capacity. Five tables, interminably long, were lined by unbroken files of diners.

At the head of the middle table sat Mr. Lee, the club's president; at the foot, according to custom, its newly elected member.

But Lloyd, as he sat there, saw few faces turned to him. It seemed to be the etiquette of the club to make these gracious formalities as easy as possible for the fledglings. And so it was. The maiden speech of a novice would be cause enough for embarrassment. They could all remember that ordeal. Even the numerous waiters, long versed by instinct in the club's most cherished traditions, failed to follow the example of their fellows, noticeable at public affairs of the kind, and forebore to cast covert glances at the guest of honor. As for the menu, it, too, conformed to the venerable unwritten laws of the institution. "Have them short," one of the founders had long ago suggested. "Give him a chance. Have them short and simple, then he won't have time to get in a feeze, and he won't be handicapped by indigestion." This they had always adhered to. Five or six courses and, through them, one kind of wine—to wit, champagne—then at once the president's toast, and,

next, the novitiate's answer. There must be nothing elaborate, nothing stilted, nothing suggestive of that odious term, a "function."

The toast of the president was never wordy. The new member, moreover, a few days before his ordeal, usually received a gentle hint as to the eloquence of brevity. By natural choice it had fallen to the lot of Cuthbert thus to instruct the whelps in the ways of the lions. As a rule, he had proved himself keenly adequate to the task before him, but in the present instance he purposely neglected the precaution. Thanks to that constant stitching process so unremittent in his mind, he had pieced together this and that with remarkable ingenuity until, after several months of deduction, he had worked on his brain a wonderfully symmetrical pattern.

He sat to-night at Lloyd's right, being the seconder of his friend's name. To the left was young Pritchard, the sculptor, who had received the honors of the last banquet.

So much for the order of precedence. It stopped here. Punctiliousness was obnoxious to the company. They sat as they pleased, according to interests and friendships. For instance, at the head of another table in the far end of the room, presided the veteran humorist. Of course, at his side sat the dark-bearded man of world-wide travel, next to whom the energetic sociologist seemed striving to keep a hold on the conversation by the aid of appropriate interjections. Enoch saw Charlie Parker, on one side of Mr. Lee, hobnobbing over his Camembert with the professor of Greek, who sat on the other.

But now that the members were moving back their chairs and smoke began to ascend heavily above them, he gave no heed to personalities. It was as though the fumes of their cigars had entered his brain. He saw nothing clearly—merely a long, white streak, narrowing

in perspective till it reached Mr. Lee; merely two long lines of white patches beside it, which were innumerable shirt-fronts; merely these and the smoke, heavily cohering.

The sight of the publisher's face, round, red, and jovial, had become for the moment almost unbearable. Enoch felt as though his good angel had assumed a comic mask, hopelessly non-conducive to inspiration. And the chirping of Cuthbert was worse still. What ironical tormentor had put them one and all in such genial spirits? How much easier had they begun already to look at him askance. But no; their glances, now directed towards him in pleasant anticipation, were indicative only of fellowship, welcome, and good-will.

Little could they guess the true nature of the ordeal before him. They considered it merely the making of a maiden speech. They could not have dreamed that his heart stood still, bound as by a thousand cords, and literally painful. They could not have imagined that the very soul in him was numb. If he appeared pale to them and nervous, they attributed it, no doubt, to the natural stage-fright of a first effort. And so they were maddeningly encouraging him with their glances.

Stage-fright? How futile a description of his feelings! Stage-fright? No; it was mortal agony. The comic masks and the white shirt-fronts and the white streak of the table-cloth and, even worse, the fog of smoke got into his brain and all but deranged it. He was cold as death, unreal as a forgotten dream. His throat was parched and felt swollen. He was sick, not only at heart, but with an actual sensation of nausea.

Nevertheless, he sat in his chair and crossed his legs, talking, smoking, over-imitating the general ease. When Mr. Lee rose to toast him he even contrived a smile.

The little, old publisher stood up, squared his shoulders, beamed at Enoch, and, thrusting his hands beneath

his coat-tails, which fairly waggled with animation as he spoke, delivered himself in this wise:

"Gentlemen, the worst of it is there's nothing to say. My thunder has been stolen by the world at large. I need scarcely introduce Mr. Enoch Lloyd. I need scarcely tell you that he is one of the most promising apprentices in the world's workshop. You know that already." He smiled. "Moreover, it is poor policy to overpraise apprentices." He paused, his coat-tails motionless with satisfaction. Then, "But, joking aside," he continued, taking up a glass of champagne; "the honors, as usual, are even. I am referring, gentlemen"—he leaned forward impressively with finger-tips touching the table —"I am referring to the honor done the Millennium Club by Mr. Enoch Lloyd, and the honor done Mr. Enoch Lloyd by the Millennium Club. He is worthy, I know, of our best ideals. In short, he is a man. And as for us"—again he paused, moving his squirrel-like cheeks as though there were nuts in them—"as for ourselves, well, the new member is now one of us. There can be no need to tell him. Gentlemen"—this with a quaint dignity, and catching up his glass—"I toast Mr. Enoch Lloyd." His eyes beamed over the brim at his young protégé, as if this were the pleasantest moment of his declining years.

A round of applause followed this informal greeting; then, as Mr. Lee sat down, every face was turned to Enoch.

The silence seemed to be that of a sea of listeners. The world was listening for his voice. Before he rose his face was gray as ashes. The words of his patron had meant nothing. The toast had seemed little more than ironical gibberish in his ears. It was merely an inarticulate expression of reproach. The smoke had seemed to obscure even the voice that had offered it.

Enoch was before the tribunal of his peers. Until he

rose he trembled in his chair. The cigarette was shaking in his fingers. He was adrift on an ocean of falling waves. The sensation of sinking into nothingness resembled that of a common nightmare, and the depths were without a bottom. He was thinking of nothing. He had become little more than a sentient being, beat upon by impressions that sapped his strength. Stage-fright? No; it was mortal agony — this having to wait and sit there and cross his legs and smoke and smile.

But when he stood up in the breathless silence they saw a change come over him. The mere act of rising appeared to vivify his bearing. His face, white as the linen cloth, seemed strangely luminous. And though they saw his hand tremble as he brushed back the hair from his forehead, it was clinched firmly when he lowered it beside him. His eyes, gazing straight ahead, high and far, were almost supernaturally clear.

Pritchard, looking up at him, felt a lack in the sculptor's art. Could he have reproduced those eyes in marble he might have called the work "A Vision of Truth."

For a moment Enoch was voiceless. He seemed to have forgotten their presence. He appeared—they afterwards remembered—as if summoning a power from beyond. Pritchard thought the set of his head was the perfect poise of inspiration.

"Gentlemen, I regret that, instead of accepting the great honor you have done me, I must withdraw my name from the membership of the Millennium Club. I am not worthy to belong. I must resign." He paused a moment and stood marble-white, his head now slightly bent, but still with his eyes far-looking and upraised as if to the spaces that surround humanity.

The air was breathless. No one stirred. Perhaps many of these men here gathered together—men who had created and immortalized the great moments of life in

painting, sculpture, and literature—knew in their hearts that one of these moments was now at hand. The crisis of a man's life was about to be enacted before them. One and all they sat watching the death-white face, the bent head, the luminous eyes of the youthful author, with tense expectation in their gaze. The trivialities of life, so important through the larger part of it, were utterly forgotten. His peers were waiting breathless for his self-imposed confession.

Yet Lloyd, the centre of all their wonder—Lloyd who had been so sensitive to public opinion that a word from Cuthbert until this moment could have made him wince, stood there through the crucial ordeal almost oblivious of his surroundings.

"I owe a confession to the world, and nothing could more strongly demand it than this occasion. You who have read *The Greatest Good*, and have offered me a place among you, are surely entitled to an explanation. Mr. Lee tells you that I am a man. He is terribly mistaken. I have not proved myself worthy of that noble appellation." He paused with a look of limitless sorrow, and Cuthbert, beside him, had no heart to glance up for more than an instant. After he had done so the little critic nervously took off his rimless glasses, rubbed them clear, and, forgetting to resume them, held them in his hand tightly. Be the past what it might, Enoch this moment was the picture of manhood.

"The story is briefly told. My book had failed. The failure, together with a private disappointment, unmanned me. I sat one night alone in my country camp and I cringed—yes, cringed like a coward before my misfortunes." Again he paused, and now for the first time gazed at the lines of faces, avoiding only the bewildered little countenance of Stephen Lee. Many a glance was lowered as he summoned the courage to meet it. The strength of his look appalled the listeners. Straight,

white, firm, he stood there unflinching, merciless to his pride, humbling himself before them. Yet they noticed a something of indefinable pride in his very abasement. And there was, for the strength had come to him. Though it had been Marion who had inspired this eternal moment, the capacity was in him to live it; the spark was already there to burst into flame. She had intimately known his spirit.

"As I sat alone, beaten by failure, I asked myself, 'Is it worth while?' Why struggle on? My name would always mean nothing. How I had pictured that name as famous, how I had been almost unconsciously, self-deceptively, all the time longing for recognition and fame—fame—fame—while assuring myself that I scorned it, I need not try to tell you. Nor do I blame fate for all that has happened, though fate, a malevolent fate, had much to do with my downfall. Perhaps you have heard of an authoress whose name, on account of its mere sound, would bring a smile to your lips on any other occasion, but whose work it would be even beneath you to despise. Her name is Dolly Cohen."

He stopped abruptly. A faint snap had sounded beside him. He glanced down. Cuthbert was ruefully inspecting a pair of glasses that had suddenly been broken by the pressure of his closed palm.

Enoch cast a fearless glance at the files of innumerable faces, but still avoided Mr. Lee's. No; they were not smiling. They were dark with perplexity and a vague suspicion.

"Gentlemen," he declared, in accents cold as steel, "I am Dolly Cohen."

This said, they saw him square his shoulders, then, as though purposely martyrizing himself, he gazed for the first time straight into the dismayed eyes of his patron, Stephen Lee.

From Cuthbert there came a short, sharp sigh of relief,

of the sort that a man heaves when the climax of a tragedy is over.

The listeners stirred restlessly, but there was not a single whisper of astonishment. They hung on his words spellbound; and yet there was nothing dramatic in his manner—simply a fixed intensity.

"I am Dolly Cohen. That night, just after the news of my failure had reached me, I sat in my room with paper before me, intending to try again. But, instead, I only loafed there and scribbled my name, and wondered if it would ever be famous. As I did so I hit upon this pseudonym by a curious fatality. And it sounded so antagonistic, so diametrically opposed to the name Enoch Lloyd, that I laughed and immediately started to imagine what sort of book a woman by that name would write. I decided her books would be flippant, sordid, and trashy, with, perhaps, a sprinkling of graceful impropriety, and thereupon I set out to write just such a novel. I succeeded so admirably, or rather so ignobly, that soon the joke became dead earnest. The novel had an enormous sale. Next, of course, there came urgent requests for a second, then a third, 'somewhat spicier'; the requirements were—a demand with which I seemed more and more capable of complying. Realizing this downward tendency, I resolved at last to drop the whole infamous business. But it was now impossible."

His voice fell; his eyes had a slightly haunted look; his face was drawn.

"It was now impossible. A woman had assumed the name of Dolly Cohen and was enjoying a spurious fame as the author of my novels."

At this there was a second stir; many started. Enoch heard whispered exclamations of astonishment. He forged ahead.

"I met her, and she threatened to expose me if I stopped. Even then I would have preferred exposure

to such a slavery had not my name suddenly become famous in England and later here. I could not bear to think of that name being dragged in the mire, and so I chose the weaker way. Of the woman I need say no more, and little of the sophistries with which I strove to deceive myself. I decided to contribute to both types of literature, to the higher sort as Enoch Lloyd, to the lower as Dolly Cohen, but the thing was impossible." He paused. Now, for the first time, his voice had faltered; now, for the first time, his glance was shrinkingly cast down. Nevertheless, he continued to the end. "What was my surprise to find that I could no longer do work of the right sort. It did not ring true. It had the discord of charlatanry. It was obviously a sham." He glanced at Mr. Lee as though for a tacit assent, and the old publisher, thus hearing his letter quoted, inclined his head.

Enoch now drew himself up to his full height. "I have decided that this confession to you, who are best fitted to sit upon my case, is the only means of making a turning-point in my life. It was as though something had to be torn out of me. I could think of nothing but this way. Hereafter I shall strive to regain that which I have lost. I shall work and work to do so till I die; but, gentlemen"—his voice fell very low—"this is the last time that I can ever accept or you can offer the gracious hospitality of the Millennium Club."

Once more he paused. The recollection of a somewhat similar scene, yet, alas! how widely different—a scene once enacted at college—had recurred to his ever-sensitive memory. He had closed his speech in an eloquent debate against Cuthbert Morton, and the hands of his fellow-collegians were loudly applauding him, those hands that had begun to shape his destiny. He could hear them clapping and clapping now. Then suddenly the scene faded, and the sound. There was profound silence.

He looked at the lines of listeners. No one was clapping him to-night — not a soul. The faces wore various expressions, some sympathetic, some sad, and a few condemnatory. None of these last were the looks of those who knew him. He saw Parker, the dramatist, leaning forward with a kind of encouragement and appreciation. But the face of the veteran humorist was deeply grave. Mr. Lee seemed lost in profound abstraction. The elbows of Cuthbert were on the table, his hands clasped close and fingers intertwined so tightly that their tips were white as the linen. Pritchard, at Lloyd's left, was breathing hard.

"There is but one extenuating circumstance," concluded Enoch, slowly; "but I do not mention it to excuse myself. I cite it merely as an amazing example of fatality, also to reveal to you, in a way that whole volumes could not depict, the extraordinary *doubleness* of the life I have been leading." He leaned forward with hands on the table. "There is another name in the name *Cohen*. Another name is buried in those five letters." He paused, and they saw him suppress a shudder. "That name is *Enoch*. There is also another name in *Dolly*. Transpose its letters correctly, and the name it hides is *Lloyd*. That night, when I was alone with failure and I scribbled my name again and again, the discovery came to me of this astonishing coincidence. I treated the thing as a joke. It became a tragedy. The anagram of *Enoch Lloyd* is *Dolly Cohen!*"

A tremor ran through him from head to foot. He could no longer restrain it. And the power of speech deserted him. His eyes were blurred.

Turning, he left them in the midst of a pregnant silence.

IV

Toasting the Bride

WHILE Enoch thus took the tide of his affairs at flood, another man proceeded to force an issue after a widely different fashion.

Dolly—or, better, Céleste hereafter—was enjoying the hospitality of the Washington Hotel. With Madame Moreau she sat in the kitchen, daintily sampling the pastry of her sire. Bonhomme was nosing for crumbs beneath them. Out in the restaurant lights were low, chairs stacked on tables. The last of the diners had taken his leave some time before. It was late in the evening.

Just within the doorway connecting the kitchen with the little office, where were kept the books, and on the high shelf those money-making bottles of cordials and liqueurs, stood an old safe. The nibblers of pâtés were scowling at the paternal chef. He sat at present in the office, scratching his head and surveying the safe in perplexity. "This time I do really forget." He turned the knob vainly. "I never can remember." He rattled it angrily. "What can I do?"

Céleste pouted. "What can *I* do?"

"Yes," demanded madame, sputtering crumbs; "what can she do?"

"It's only a loan, you know," said Céleste, wheedlingly.

"And *we* brought her into the world," observed madame, in the weighty tones of responsibility.

Monsieur spun the knob around. "So we did. C'est bien vrai, ça; but what's to be done?" He frowned at the safe with exaggerated helplessness.

"I know," said madame. "I remember. You set the combination so you could not forget it. I made you. The combination, it is our three ages, one after the other, yours, Céleste's, and mine."

Monsieur bit his lip. Suddenly he smiled with covert cunning. "Yes, yes; our ages. Let us see, First, mine—forty—" He studied the dial.

"Fifty!" corrected madame, vehemently.

"Ah, yes, fifty," he admitted. "I never know. Perhaps it is because I am so young at heart." He turned the knob to the first number. "Now," said he, "to the left. Let me think. Céleste's age? Yes, yes—thirty."

Céleste winced, but the matter was too important for trifling. She was willing to confess to thirty years if thirty would open the treasury.

"There," pursued monsieur, bending to one knee. "Now once more to the right. Now the dear mother's age? Yes—forty-five." He surreptitiously winked at the circle of figures.

Madame said nothing. She was blissfully munching a mouthful of puff pastry. If he had forgotten five years of her life and thought her so young, all right. As the combination had been set to fifty, the safe, of course, would open to nothing less. She was only too willing, however, to leave those undesirable five years locked up in it. Céleste would have to wait.

Monsieur turned the knob and made a superhuman effort to pull the door open. It held against him. With a sour grimace he jumped up, flung his chair back, and came into the kitchen. "My *poor* little one, I cannot help you."

Céleste's eyes flashed angrily. "Her age is fifty, and you know it. Try that."

At this outrage a shower of crumbs filled the air. Madame was choking with offended vanity. Her daughter was a vixen. Now the minx should never have another penny. Her impertinence afforded a good excuse for refusal. And madame, like her husband, was for once glad to say "no." Céleste, in all these months of affluence, had not repaid a single sou. Worse still, she had never once invited her parents to her palatial apartment. They knew well enough of its existence; the bohemians who came there to dine had so frequently mentioned their queen.

"Jules," said madame, moodily, "it is well you cannot open the safe. We have already done too much for her."

Monsieur rubbed his hands and nodded. "Just as you say, my dear."

Céleste sprang to her feet. "You are both misers," she cried, angrily. "You're a couple of unnatural parents."

Monsieur smiled at the floor.

"Ugh!" exclaimed madame, in disgust; "that from her. Unnatural, indeed—and she so unnatural a daughter. Bah!" She rose heavily and turned on Céleste. "Go back to your swindling. Get out of here. We don't want you. You would ruin us."

Céleste's lip curled; she cast a look of bitter ridicule at the purpling face of Mère Moreau. "Oh, very well, Madame the Terror; but—"

"S-sh!" said monsieur, suddenly. "Some one has come for supper. How unusual!"

They followed his glance. Looking through the office, which opened on the restaurant over a low counter for the dispensing of smokables and receiving of payments, they saw a short, thick-set individual take down a chair and seat himself. In another minute he was knocking loudly on the table with his knuckles.

Monsieur Moreau ran out by the hall, hastening to respond.

While madame and her "little one" in the kitchen recovered their self-control as best they might, the proprietor had a peculiar experience out in the hallway. After taking the order of his new customer, he was starting back when he heard a low summons, almost a whisper, from the vicinity of the front door. Turning sharply, he hurried to the vestibule. Here stood a tall man of a personality that caused Monsieur Moreau to quake visibly, the stranger was so domineering of aspect, so frigid. "She is here," he said at once, with a short nod. "Don't deny it. I followed her."

"Who?" stammered Moreau. "Who is here?"

"Dolly Cohen."

"Nom de Dieu," thought Moreau, "the little one is lost. This is one of her dupes or an officer of the law. At last she will be imprisoned." Then, aloud, "Dolly Cohen?" he repeated, thoughtfully. "Mais, non, m'sieur; there is no one of that name—"

The stranger swore. "Don't tell me that. I know she's here, whatever her name is, and I intend to see her. I heard her voice just now—back there." Whereat he stalked past the terrified proprietor and made straight for the kitchen.

When Céleste saw him she sank to a chair, and madame stood dumbly glaring at them. Monsieur, tiptoeing in, beckoned to his wife. As she joined him in the office, "Leave them alone," said he, cautiously. "We must not be mixed up in this affair. It might land us in the station-house."

The vast bosom of Mère Moreau began to heave. She closed the kitchen door. "Oh, what shall we do? What shall we do? Our pauvre p'tite! And here is m'sieur waiting for his supper."

Jules leaned out over the counter. "Pardon, m'sieur,

there will be a slight delay in the cooking of the duck."

The thick-set gentleman, of an opulent Hibernian appearance, nodded amiably.

Meanwhile, "Well," said Céleste, in the kitchen, regaining her composure, "how did *you*—"

Her visitor laughed shortly. "I followed you."

She toyed uneasily with her knife and fork. "Well, what's up, Matthew? You seem impatient about something."

"I am. I have come to marry you—now."

Her face paled; her hand clinched on the table-knife, but she laughed softly. "Now? How absurd! Have you been drinking again?"

"No, I have not. I mean what I say."

She held up the knife and her laughter tinkled gently. "Do you know I'd like to stab you with that? It would really entertain me."

He came close to her and with a sweep of his hand sent the knife rattling on the floor. "That, for your stab! I don't fear you any more; and, by God, I will have you!"

At first she said nothing. She might fare far worse as Céleste Moreau than as the rich Mrs. Matthew Steele. He had straightened out. He would not drag her down. He was now reliable and very strong, stronger even than the usually fatal habit into which she had so capriciously led him. Had he still been the loose-lipped, bleareyed monomaniac of a month ago, nothing could have induced her to marry him. She would have preferred a death by inches to life with that haunting creature, that *thing* of her own making. But now that he was again the sure, virile business man of a year ago, he seemed to be, after all, the most logical way of escape from hostile circumstance. There was, however, one difficulty. What of the novel he had demanded? Well, sometimes the truth is the best expedient, especially *before* marriage.

If she waited till his infatuation was less intense he might not so readily forgive. And the game was up, anyway.

"I am not Dolly Cohen," she said, suddenly. "I did not write those books. I stole the name."

To her astonishment, Steele laughed. As usual, he was unsurprisable. Perhaps he had guessed, lately. ' It doesn't matter," he told her. "Of course, I had an inkling. Those proof-sheets meant something. How did you dare to let me see the heading of that Jekyll and Hyde story? You might have known—"

Céleste shrugged. "Oh, I was desperate, that's all. But have you guessed who wrote those novels?"

Steele smiled and was about to answer when she laid a hand on his arm and stopped him. He could not understand the tone of her voice. He had never before heard it. "No matter," she said; "if you do suspect, don't say so. Don't tell any one—even yourself! This is my last condition. Promise me?"

He bent over her and took her hand in his huge paw. "Yes, and, besides, I wouldn't anyway, even if I positively knew. That would be folly. The books will sell for a time on Dolly Cohen's name. They're not dead yet. I'll keep them going."

Céleste sprang up, paused, shivered slightly, then kissed him full on the lips. "There! That's my first kiss!"

Steele crushed her to him like a big animal. "I believe it," he said, with brutal passion; "that's why I want you."

This was her reward for having so long followed her father's advice: "Be unobtainable." Steele knew that she had refused his fortune before marriage had been proposed, also the wealth of others.

In a moment she broke from him. "So I shall still be famous?"

"Yes."

"And you don't mind knowing who I really am?"

"No; I'd take you out of the gutter, provided you were an honest woman."

She laughed with evident satisfaction. What a relief it was to be real! "I'm Céleste Moreau. My father and mother keep this hotel."

"Good!" said Steele. "I was once a printer's devil."

She studied his eyes. "You won't drink any more?"

"Is there any need to ask me that?"

"No, of course not. Well, then, to-morrow I'll marry you."

Again Steele smiled. "No, you won't; you'll do it now."

"Now! But how can I?"

For answer Steele opened the office door and beckoned across the counter to the stranger in the restaurant. When this mysterious individual had come around into the kitchen, "I want to introduce my friend Judge Ryan," said Steele. "I brought him. Judge, this is the bride."

Céleste shuddered. The thing was so business-like. Now she knew how Steele had made a fortune. "But I must be married by the Church," she objected, nervously. "This is no marriage."

"Excuse me," said the Irish magistrate, "but it is. This goes all right. It's for keeps, I promise you."

"Later," said Steele, "we'll go to any church you want to."

Monsieur and madame were peering in from the little office. Céleste called to them. "I'm going to be married."

Their eyes widened; their mouths opened; then monsieur stepped lightly forward. "Ma p'tite, ma p'tite! how delightful!" He twirled his mustache. What a happy solution to the problem. "I really cannot tell you how much pleasure," he began, pompously, but al-

ready madame had pushed past him and Céleste was buried in the capacious bosom. The magistrate beamed at this lovely display of filial and maternal devotion. Steele glanced covertly at the empty office where stood the bottles of cordials, high on the shelf, then away, as though fearing to look again. Monsieur crossed over to the range and stood ruefully gazing at the oven door. "Is it not too bad that I cannot in time bake a cake?" He pirouetted about like a dancing-master. "Ah, mais, ça ne fait rien! To-morrow we will have a wonderful wedding breakfast."

At thought of the breakfast madame released her offspring. "Yes, yes! Oh, I am so much excited!"

Céleste turned to Steele. "Where shall we go? It is very late." Suddenly an indescribable expression stole into her eyes. It hinted of an original idea. She lowered her lids to hide it. Something born from her fantastic imagination suddenly suggested itself. Her face, as the look deepened, seemed to denote bitterness peculiarly blent with satisfaction. Like a flash she had determined to endure the ordeal by transforming in fancy the personality of Steele into that of another. Was ever so severe a test put upon the imaginative faculty? And yet there might be a way of aiding her mind in this desperate delusion. So much depends on the mise-en-scène in comedy—or tragedy.

Steele grew impatient. "We'll get married first, then why can't we go to your apartment?"

"I've given it up; all my belongings are in storage."

"Have you? Come to mine, then."

She shook her head and turned to her father. "Tell me, is the top-floor front occupied?"

"No; it is now vacant."

"Then we will hire it," she said, and whispered in Steele's ear. "Now that you know I'm their daughter, why not stay under their roof? Besides, they'll be *so*

disappointed to-morrow if we're not here for the wedding breakfast."

Steele nodded. "Come, judge, do your worst."

After which pleasantry the ceremony was performed. In a business-like way and according to the statutes the knot was tied, Céleste smiling light-heartedly, Steele more than ever ungainly with gratification, the magistrate jovial and complimentary with the prospect of a fat fee, and the mountain and the mouse bringing up the rear, too contented to wonder at this happy ending of all their difficulties with the child of their hearts and pockets.

When Céleste was Mrs. Matthew Steele she turned to her lord and master and again whispered bashfully in his ear. "I'm going up for a few minutes. Don't worry. I won't run away. It's only that I want to be alone. It's all been so sudden." She bowed to the committer of the deed. "Good-night, judge, and thank you?" Whereat she left them. Even now Steele followed her to the door to make sure that she was not eluding him. When he turned back to the others his yellow teeth showed in a satisfied smile. His bride had gone upstairs to her bedroom.

Bonhomme crawled to the stairway and scurried after her.

The servant of justice smiled at Moreau. "Is the duck cooked?"

Moreau's eyes danced. France appreciated Ireland's humor. "Yes, m'sieur, the duck is cooked, though not the one m'sieur was good enough to order."

With a laugh at Steele, the magistrate departed.

Matthew crossed the kitchen and crossed it again, in silence. This slow march he repeated several times; and Moreau noticed that, now that the big event was done with, there seemed gradually to grow a vague restlessness and lack of ease in the man who had forced this issue. The strength with which he had carried the thing

through appeared to be followed by a telling relaxation. Steele's glance evaded the two who wonderingly regarded him. His eyes, as he paced back and forth, suddenly became haunted. He kept looking furtively into the little office, the door of which he passed repeatedly. There, high on the shelf, the bottles were arrayed in line. Catching the light of the gas-jet, they became little shining streaks of red and green and yellow that got into his brain and stayed there. His lips were parted, the lower visibly white and dry below the fringe of his mustache. His cheeks grew flaccid. His fingers were fumbling at his collar. He said nothing. Céleste was long in coming.

When at last the bride returned, the bridegroom was not in the kitchen. Thinking he was perhaps saying good-night to Judge Ryan, she slipped quickly to Moreau and drew from her pocket a letter just written. "Post this for me," she said, "but, in Heaven's name, don't let him see it." As Moreau nodded with a worldly air and, winking, pocketed the letter, "Where is he?" asked Céleste, smiling.

Moreau hesitated. Madame, however, was not so considerate. She pointed to the dimly lit office.

In sudden alarm Céleste ran to the open doorway, then paused, horror-struck.

Steele smiled down at her. He had just taken from the high shelf a bottle containing an opaque and greenish liquid, slightly opalescent in the gas-light. After smiling at her, she saw him look about for a glass. On finding none, he suddenly laughed outright and raised the bottle to his lips.

Céleste cried aloud. Quicker even than he was, she sprang towards him and caught at the bottle. He raised it high above her reach, then with his other arm grasped her to him and pushed her backwards into the kitchen.

"I'm going to drink to the bride," he said, "not because I want to, but because I've got to." He smiled down at her. "Now I know why the doctor looked queer."

"Dieu de Dieu," cried Moreau; "absinthe from a bottle!"

Madame sank to a chair. "It must be the last stage."

But Céleste was catching at his arm with the ferocity of a tigress. "God in heaven! Don't, don't! Matthew, listen to me! I will help you! Stop! For God's sake, stop! Fight it! Wait! The craving will pass! Wait!"

Steele chuckled. "'Drink,' you said; 'come,' you said; 'the taste is acquired. Drink,' you said, 'to our wedding day!'"

Bonhomme appeared in the doorway and cocked an eye at them. The Moreaus were white with awe.

Céleste moaned audibly, convulsed by desperate anxiety, and the two stupefied watchers saw her summon all the strength in her little body and seize his upraised arm. But at this, with his free hand, huge, prehensile, and now insanely defensive, he caught the fingers that clawed his arm and bent them back as if to break them.

She groaned in pain.

The instant was propitious for the hell in him. He lowered the bottle to his lips and drank deep, she imploring him the while and cursing him, till suddenly she fell to her knees and clasped his own, and, forgetting in her distress the watchers behind her, prayed to him and to God inarticulately. For once the little silver hunchback at her side—her favorite talisman—tinkled on her chatelaine forgotten. At last she was in the hands of a Fate too big to be cajoled with superstition. She was finding it impossible to flirt with Heaven.

The dog in terror yapped at their heels.

Steele laughed at the puny cries. They but served

to increase the disorder of his brain. "Our wedding day!" he mumbled, and drank deep. Then, with the long, never-forgettable sigh of a craving temporarily relieved, he lowered the bottle, stooped, raised Céleste and bore her with him to the door. She appeared to be on the verge of fainting.

Bonhomme followed close to Steele, alert and menacing as if awaiting a chance to assist his beloved mistress.

When they heard the man heavily ascending the stairs with their daughter, the witnesses of this appalling scene came at last to their senses. "Quick," said madame, "we must do something!"

"What can we do?" whimpered the father. "They are husband and wife."

"Dear Lord," moaned the mother, "hear him dragging her up-stairs!"

"Yes; it is terrible, but I fear she has brought it on herself. Hush! what was that?" They heard an oath, a little cry, then a bumping on the stairs and a light thud at the bottom. "Bonhomme! oh, it's the poor Bonhomme!" said monsieur, with a shudder.

When the sound of the heavy footfalls had ceased, madame wailed aloud and wrung her fat hands in sorrow. "Let us go to the room and stay there with her. Quick, the top-floor front!"

Monsieur sprang up and led the way. In the hall he nearly stumbled over the prostrate dog, who had evidently been kicked down-stairs by the bridegroom. Whether he was dead or alive they could not determine for the gloom, nor did they stop to investigate.

When they reached the top story monsieur tried the door. "Dear me," he snivelled, "it is locked."

"Is the key in the lock?"

Moreau peeped in at the key-hole. "No," was the despairing whisper; "he has taken it out."

"Go down," panted madame, "and get the pass-key."

Monsieur started to descend, then turned and wept like a child. "Our little one took the pass-key that night, and never gave it back!"

V

Life in Epitome

"WELL, Ezra, did you think I was dead?"

Slocum jumped. "H'loa, Enoch! you back?"

The light-ship's master was eying dolefully the deserted cabin when suddenly its missing occupant entered the opening behind him.

It was late in the afternoon, and the long June day, earth's dearest guest, was lingering still on the threshold of the west, beneficently delaying its departure. The blue of the wide, untrammelled heavens seemed unusually near. The atmosphere was living. Here and there over the meadows it was visible to the eye. And the lowing of cattle, the even-song of birds, the drone of insects seemed to be the expression of its life. Like the palpable, colorless, moving atmosphere, the sounds were the subtlest of appeals to the senses. They inhabited the ether. Even the *clung* of a loafing bull-frog down in the marsh was good to hear. But the stir of the breeze was music. The stir of the breeze is the only whisper that exerts the influence of a tone. Pleasanter, though, than all the voices of nature was the voice of a friend. Enoch felt something akin to his old, boyish devotion and loyalty when the master of the light-ship greeted him with that never-failing "H'loa!"

Slocum stood leaning on an oar with one hand; in the other he carried a basket. "I brought you a mess of fish, but when I seed the place closed ag'in I thought, wal, he's cleared out for another year or so, I swan!"

Enoch laughed and unlocked the door. "Not I! Only a couple of days, that's all." He glanced across the water. "I see the *Jamboree* is in. When did she come?"

"Lars night, and I thought mebbe you was aboard, but they rowed ashore this mornin' lookin' for you—Mr. O'Brien's men."

Enoch nodded. Perhaps this accounted for one of three letters—still unread in his pocket—which he had found awaiting him at the Bristol post-office.

Slocum set down the fish within the doorway. "I 'ain't time to help you cook 'em. 'Night."

"Wait," said Enoch, "I'll sail you over. No; there's not enough wind. Never mind, we'll row. I've got to go out to the *Jamboree*. We can tow your skiff."

While they rowed out slowly in Lloyd's boat, each at an oar, Slocum, winking to himself behind his idol, slyly remarked, "I guess you've come back more ways 'n one."

"You're right," replied Enoch, pulling harder. "I have."

"And mebbe," pursued the voice in the bow, "you kin tend light better herearter."

"Yes; perhaps I can."

Slocum bit his quid. "Now, I'm not askin' no questions, but it did seem queer."

To this there was no answer, and the old molluscan took the hint. "What a pace you're a-settin'! But, speakin' of the light, it won't be on the ship much longer. No currents, eh? No winds, no fogs, no shiftin'!" This with a crusty smile of sagacity.

"Good," said Enoch, in a low voice.

"The light," panted Slocum, now forced by his fellow-rower to pull for dear life, "will be on a rock."

They were before long at the ship's side. Its master, making fast his skiff, scrambled up, agile as a monkey. "Come soon 'n' tend it," he called down.

Enoch nodded. "I'll come," he promised, "when the light is on a rock," and rowed away slowly.

As he left it, the light-ship had an effect, in the soft haze, of receding, due to his own motion. Almost imperceptibly it seemed to drift from him as though setting out at last for an actual voyage to the open ocean. There stood Slocum in the stern, his figure growing constantly smaller. Once he raised his arm and waved it with a jerky uplift from elbow to hand, a sort of short good-bye in his lonely language of gesture. Then he withdrew below.

Enoch smiled to himself and rested on his oars. From his pocket he took out the letters. First he read O'Brien's. The writing sprawled across the paper.

"Dear Angel, — I'm off again for nowhere. As the yacht is at present supporting the Lord knows how many able-bodied loafers, who have nothing to do but polish brass and change their togs and joke at the absence flag, I am thinking that give-away up there will have to come down, and the owner, his royal nibs, stay aboard for a while just to prove he's a yachtsman. Hang it all, what's the use of the dough, anyway, if you don't bake it? Come along, and again we'll do the foreign act together. I want to hear you sing 'Yo, ho,' and see you do a hornpipe on deck when she's half seas over. What's the use of your being a clam? Come out of it. We'll go wherever you say and poke her nose into any old port and fool around all summer.

"I'm sending her to Bristol for you. Pack your toothbrush and come along. She's to pick me up in Boston. I've asked Cutty, but he's grouchy about something, and says I ought to go to work, which is true enough, but I can't do it. Nobody wants me. If I blow a man to a drink, he promises to think about it, and that's the end of him. If I don't, he doesn't even do that much. The old man says I'm the toughest job he ever contracted for, and that's pretty strong. He's building sky-scrapers by the dozen.

"Well, here's a chance for you to get out of all that wool-gathering you seem to be doped by lately, so come along.

"Yours, for the ocean-wave and plenty of provisions,

"GOL."

Enoch smiled a trifle darkly. Escape! Was this the last hope of the devil's advocate? Escape from the results of that terrible confession? How curious that Goliath should have, all unknowingly, made possible a flight from consequences.

Enoch thrust the invitation into his pocket and hastily tore open the second letter, of which the chirography was almost microscopic but perfectly legible, being Cuthbert Morton's:

"DEAR ENOCH,—O'Brien says he's going to drag you off to Europe. Perhaps it is none of my business, but I cannot help writing to say don't go. Cobbler, stick to your last. I now believe you can do something. At first you were up in heaven, then you were down in hell, and now you're on terra firma. Don't go meandering under the sky again. It's dangerous. It means idling above the depths that can drown you. I repeat, it's none of my business, but I'm going to say this much: you need a grind. Keep your nose to the grindstone and you will do something. The best thing you ever did in your life was that confession. I never saw such an exhibition of backbone. After you left there was a dead silence till at last somebody turned to Charlie Parker, the dramatist, and said, 'That was a scene that puts to shame the highest efforts of your art.' 'Yes,' said Parker, 'it was the climax of a *living* tragedy.' The old Greek prof took a look down the lines of faces and nodded to himself. 'Now we know better than ever,' he observed, 'what Aristotle meant when he described the after-effect on the audience of true tragedy. No doubt you remember the word. In English it means *purification*.'

"Yes, Enoch, you did a big thing. I said to Pritchard, 'If you were to put Lloyd in marble as he stood there, what would you call the figure?' His answer was unexpected. 'I would call it—*Success*.'

"I have had a glimmer of the truth for several months —ever since that night in your room when you got so unwarrantably angry with me. That was the rage of guilt. In the first place, I knew you, and in the second, I happened to take up one day a novel called *The Flame of Folly*, which Steele was impertinent enough to send me for a criticism. I caught a glimpse of your style, and later I bought *The Altar of Love*. There were several peculiar parallels, or, rather, glaring contrasts, between this and *The Greatest Good*. Having already suspected you, I looked for more and found them. Two of the most striking contradictions revealed the extraordinary mingling of a double identity in your authorship.

"In *The Flame of Folly* you say: '*The voice of humor is cracked with age. Laughter is in its dotage.*'

"In *The Greatest Good* you had said: '*Humor is the brother of the Three Graces. His laughter, like Faith, Hope, and Charity, is eternally childlike.*'

"In *The Altar of Love*, Dolly Cohen's second book, which was far more dangerous than the first—you must have been in a pleasant mood when you wrote it—I hit upon the following: '*Death, it seems, is the end of everything, the beginning of nothing. In fearing its darkness perhaps we are afraid of our own shadows.*'

"But in *The Greatest Good* you had already observed: '*The darkness of death is a gracious mystery; perhaps it is even the shadow of God.*'

"And so on.

"You see, being a critic and Cuthbert Morton, I noticed these peculiar distortions. Probably now, more than ever, you will call me a sort of psychical detective. Well, I have no apologies. Detectives, at least, serve the interests of justice. It was I who determined you should join the Millennium Club. If you consented to that I would feel sure I was mistaken. I knew you could not do it. Your election would bring the thing to a head. I believe in the knife. So perhaps you will say again, 'Yes, he means well, anyway.'

"By-the-by, we decided to say nothing of the affair. It goes no further than the Millennium Club.

"Faithfully always, CUTHBERT MORTON."

Enoch smiled sadly. Why should Cuthbert have recalled those convicting passages? And the silence of the Millennium's members meant little to him. There was another channel of exposure. Pocketing the letter, he tossed to the seat before him the third communication, contained in a small mauve-tinted envelope, and fell to rowing.

Yes, Cutty had always meant well, after all.

Coming abreast of the *Jamboree*, Enoch mounted hastily to the deck.

The captain, with a smile of welcome, touched his visor. "Then you're coming, sir?"

"No; I want to write to Mr. O'Brien."

"Yes, sir; in the cabin." The captain's face fell. Mr. Lloyd had been the life of the last voyage.

Enoch scribbled a note on the elaborately emblazoned writing-paper:

"Dear Gol,—A thousand thanks, but I can't go with you. I have too much work to do. The cobbler must stick to his last. Good luck, and the best of voyages.

'Yours for the grindstone,

"Enoch."

When he rowed away it was evening, almost too dark for reading. Realizing this, he again rested on his oars, drifting homeward, and looked at the mauve-colored envelope. With a frown he opened it, and managed to decipher in the deepening gloom this vivacious farewell:

"Dear Enoch Lloyd,—Why should I? That's what I say to myself, and it's quite a sensible question. But the answer is still more indicative of wisdom. I won't. Perhaps I never intended to. All the same, it was a telling pistol to hold at your head, even if it wasn't loaded. And it really wasn't. Never would I have exposed you—you're such a boy. Of course, you remember when I showed you the proof-sheets of that article. Well, they were all blank

—blank cartridges!—except the one you saw. What do you think of that? Don't you feel a trifle sheepish?

"Now, here's a piece of news for you. I have married Steele this evening. The Queen of Bohemia has become the consort of Baal. Funny, isn't it? And where do you suppose I am writing this last good-bye? Ten to one you can't guess. I am in your room, top floor front, the Washington Hotel. Somehow, I could not say 'no' to the whim that brought me here, and I shall try to think of you even after he comes up to me. At the present moment the bridegroom is cooling his heels down-stairs. I like to keep him waiting. In spite of the stains on the walls and these horrible daubs from the Latin Quarter, it's nice to be here. *Clickety-tap, click-tap,* I can hear your typewriter as though it were tapping still. I had a machine myself once, but I never used it. I hired the thing to fool Steele. It made him think that I was you. Well, I was for a time, wasn't I?

"I am smoking a cigarette. Do you remember when I sat here with you and smoked one? Bah! a cigarette is better than a borrowed plume any day, and everything ends in smoke. Behold my plumes ascending in spirals to the ceiling.

"The court of the queen is deserted. Gone are the courtiers back to their holes. I wanted Sennacherib to marry Félice, and the Snark to marry Mr. Blankski; but it's hard to manage a tableau for the climax of real life. They didn't see it. So I have sent Félice to the convent where her mistress used to be. She is such a good little creature. Possibly she will come out of it better than I did. Speaking of the convent reminds me of something. Oh, dear me, have I got to tell you? It's queer how you affect me. This is a thing that I could never confess to a priest, so I'm going to confess it to you. Perhaps it will show you how oddly the good in me went wrong. Do you remember the silver crucifix that hung over the prie-dieu? Well, I stole it from the convent. I stole it to worship it! Did you ever hear of such a woman?

"Why am I scribbling on and on so glibly? I think it is because Matthew Steele is down there waiting for me,

and because it is strangely satisfying to be here in your room alone with you in the last few moments before he comes.

"Well, good-bye, my Lord Two-names. That anagram is, indeed, an amazing freak of fate. I'll never forget my delight when I discovered it—when I discovered that the name *Dolly Cohen* was so weirdly contained in *Enoch Lloyd*. How did you feel when I whispered it in your ear? Dieu, the sight of you then made me a baby! Good-bye, milord; you see I don't say my Lord High Executioner. And why? Do you want to know? The reason is this: the novels of Dolly Cohen are still selling. Steele says so. They are not dead. You can't kill them. If you confessed the whole thing to the world, you would merely boom the books. Of course Steele knows I'm a sham, and suspects the real author. But I have sworn him to secrecy, partly for your sake, but, as usual, mostly for my own. If I can't *write* books, I can at least *talk* whole volumes, and live on the laurels of the past.

"Concerning that luminous beauty who took you away from me, I have nothing to say. She is more in keeping with the blue of your eyes than I am, and I always believe in harmony.

"So it goes and so go I. Good-bye to you, Enoch Lloyd. What nonsense I have been writing! But this is the end of it all, and I'm a positive coward at leaving you. It seems impossible to write the last adieu. Oh, how I fear finality!

"Somehow, I'm fond of stupid Bonhomme to-night. He is lying at my feet. Somehow, he keeps me from being lonely. What wouldn't I give for a box of candy? I'd sell my soul for a morsel of nougat.

"So it goes and so go I, or at least I don't, for I'm consoling myself that you won't forget me. Even when you stand with your arm about her you will perhaps remember your other self. Look at me! look at me! Oh, how I hate to make you remember me this way—to make you remember me simply because I typify your evil. But I cannot bear to have you forget me—no, I cannot bear it. Good-bye, I am now going down to my husband. Adieu, dear Enoch

Lloyd—*the last adieu.* There! That proves my courage.

"I was about to sign myself Céleste, then Céleste Steele, but I prefer to put it,

"Yours till death,
"Dolly Cohen."

Enoch shuddered. He almost wished she had exposed him. It distressed his mind to think she had denied him something—a benefit namable only as the privilege of punishment. And still an evil contribution to literature, written under the namé that was buried in his name, would continue to exert an influence for ill. Nothing could stop it utterly. Nothing could cancel those few short months. Gladly he would have made any sacrifice, but none would avail. Something had been done that could never be undone by any human deed. Never would the wrong be wholly righted. The wound, though healed by his recent heroic treatment, would leave a scar.

Enoch, with dull anger, tore up the letter and threw the scraps overboard. Then he looked about him. Slocum's light was now far away. He could see in its gleam the *Jamboree*, just starting. A line of smoke trailed behind her. Her rakish hull was a moving streak of white, edged with lights. She was cutting up froth with her propeller. It bubbled luminous in her wake. Long he watched the receding pleasure-craft till at last, steaming faster and faster, she disappeared. The reckless, rakish, brilliant, foam-cutting spirit of his youth had vanished.

He glanced at the near shore. The tide had brought him opposite to the long, white house of the Doric Columns. Instinctively he rounded in on his homeward way. To his surprise, he saw the figure of a man, thin and tall, standing on the old stone dock peering forward to look at him.

"Is that you, Mr. Lloyd?" The voice was Timothy's.

Enoch hesitated, then, "Yes," he faintly answered.

The Old Standby appeared excited. "Wait a minute, sir—one minute." Whereupon he turned, and, forgetting his pet ailment, made speedy progress back to the house. Enoch watched the lank shadow hobble hurriedly up the slope. In a moment it was replaced by two other shadows that came downward. Enoch moored his skiff at the dock next to the white yawl *Ariel*—moored it close to the dock of memory, side by side with the boat of dreams. Landing, he went hesitantly forward to meet the figures.

Mr. Lee came first, his companion, easily recognizable in the starlight, lingering behind in the lane—waiting.

"Lloyd, I have been on the lookout for you. Timothy, all of his own accord, has been keeping watch. Well, there's little to say. But I want to welcome you back to Bristol—back to Bristol, and, better yet, to—what shall I call it?" He laid a hand on the broad shoulder. "Back to the truth. Do you remember what I once said to you about life as we went up to the house together? I said that life would tell. You see you came near to dying spiritually, but the vitality was in you to withstand that terrible, lurking atrophy which in the psychical world is analogous to the approach of death in nature. We are Americans, Lloyd, and so have as yet little to fear from decadence. But an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. See to it that you aid in dispensing this ounce hereafter. Aid in keeping the souls of men alive, in so far as you can, by your writing. You have just proved yourself qualified to assist in doing so." The old man's face lighted up with a smile in the starlight. "I was never so sure of you as I am now. That was a splendid thing you did in speaking out so bravely. I call it 'The Triumph of Life.' That's what I call your confession."

His tone became lighter. "No, no; don't say any-

thing. You see, I haven't given you a chance. It's hard to talk sometimes. Yes, yes; I know how hard—except, perhaps, to talk to—" He lowered his voice. "Well, when you write another *Greatest Good* I give my consent. *Then* you will be really worthy of my Marion." He stepped back, and, thrusting his hands behind him, inspected his protégé beamingly.

"How can I hope," began Lloyd, fervently, "ever to thank you for all—"

The little old gentleman shook his head. "No; not a word, remember. It's hard to talk sometimes, except to—" He turned away. "Besides, I have neglected the greenhouse to-day, I've been so impatient to see you." He glanced back. "Words, my dear Lloyd, are superfluous."

Marion, too, seemed to think so. Little passed between them that evening in mere words. Silence was the deeper speech. Though so lately they had stood the test and proved themselves man and woman, they were once again for a spell mere children.

A moment they watched the familiar figure of Mr. Lee receding into the vast shade of the orchard, a moment they gave of their hearts even now to his passing.

Then they turned to each other. "Enoch, Enoch—*mine!*"

She stood meltingly close to him, there in the lane alone with him, his as he was hers. Meltingly she stood there close to him, and yet with what pride in her eyes! All her pride had returned to her, but now it was pride in him.

Nevertheless he held back. "If I can write another *Greatest Good*—"

She smiled with radiant certainty. "You can. It is written already in your heart."

"Oh, Marion!"

"Enoch!"

It seemed well that the moon had not yet risen. The constancy of the stars far better defined that moment. And the night was still. Nothing did they hear save their own breathing, nothing did they see save each the depths of the other's eyes; nothing did they know save the wild, sweet wonder of their souls interblending in a kiss.

Then, at last, after a moment—or an hour—they turned with a natural, mutual instinct to the water. Along the shore they wandered, his arm about her, his hand on her throbbing heart.

"Marion—"

"Oh, Enoch—"

"Can it be?"

"It *is*."

"And we are to do great things—*together*."

"Yes; our love shall help the world."

The moon was now rising slowly over the eastern shore. Enoch turned to look at Marion, athirst for the beauty of his love—the beauty of her hair, its celestial radiance, the beauty of her eyes, their truth.

She hid her face with her hands, and, when he tried to unscreen it, hid it the more on his shoulder.

"Don't; you are beautiful," he said; then, with a quick return of his youthful fire and wilfulness, "Haven't I the right—" He paused, suddenly. "No, Marion; no, I haven't."

She raised her head. "Yes, yes; you have. Look!" She stood back for an instant, timid in so difficult a surrender.

But Enoch, humbly withholding his gaze, only clasped his arm about her again, and they strolled yet farther on the shore.

"It doesn't seem possible, Marion, that you and I—"

"No; but we *are*."

They had come to the half-way rock which rose high at the water's edge.

Before turning back they paused there a moment, his arm close about her, and looked off across the bay.

Beside the rock the ripples, silvered by the moon, were idly playing. Enoch glanced down at them. His eyes caught sight of several light, flakish things floating in the froth. The tide was gently washing them ashore. Some were already strewn upon the sand.

They were scraps of paper—scraps of the mauve-tinted letter he had torn up and thrown overboard.

Suddenly his heart constricted and seemed to be weighted down. A few words of the letter had recurred to him. "You won't forget me. Even when you stand with your arm about her you will perhaps remember your other self."

He raised his eyes. That other seemed to be there before him, standing beside the rock, as she had stood that ultimate night—a small, dark figure, her shadow, vague in the moonlight, reaching towards him, . . . the shadow of his eternal past.

THE END

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